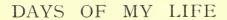




THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

I. A. Onday. Herman 1918 Digitized by the Internet Archive in 2007 with funding from Microsoft Corporation



### BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

- A BANISHED BEAUTY: a Novel. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo. 6s.
- MODERN SEA FISHING (BADMINTON LIBRARY). [In July 1855.
- THE BOOK OF THE ALL-ROUND ANGLER.

  A comprehensive Treatise on Angling in both fresh and salt water. (Illustrated.) Cloth, 5s. 6d. Large paper signed copies, in Roxburgh binding, 25s.
- THE CURIOSITIES OF ALE AND BEER. Illustrated with over 50 quaint Cuts.
- DAYS IN THULE with Rod, Gun, and Camera. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.
- THAMES RIGHTS AND THAMES WRONGS. Small fcp. 15.
- AN IRISH MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

  A Legend of the Shannon. Second Edition. Illustrated by E. MORANT COX. Cloth, 1s. 6d.: paper, 1s.

&c.





HE LITTLE SKIPPER

## DAYS OF MY LIFE

### ON WATERS FRESH AND SALT

AND OTHER PAPERS

BY

### JOHN BICKERDYKE

AUTHOR OF

'A BANISHED BEAUTY' DAYS IN THULE WITH ROD, GUN, AND CAMERA'
THE BOOK OF THE ALL-ROUND ANGLER' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

REISSUE

LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16th STREET
1901

All rights reserved

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

First printed May 1895. Cheaper Reissue May 1901.

## SH 439 C77d



## CONTENTS

## PART I FRESH WATER

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THREE THAMES TROUT	3
11.	THE PROFESSOR AND THE SALMON	10
III.	FIN-DE-SIÈCLE FISH	20
IV.	THIRTY-FIVE FEET OF PIKE	31
V.	In the Murgthal	38
VI.	A GLACIER SALMON RIVER	47
VII.	A SUMMER'S DAY ON THE OUSE	54
VIII.	A Frosty Day on the Ouse	60
IX.	Cocks and Hens	71
X.	AFTER-DINNER SEA TROUT	81
XI.	Bordering on the Marvellous	89
XII.	SECRETS OF SUCCESS	96
XIII.	'MIDST MOUNTAINS, MIDGES, AND LOCHS OF	
	SUTHERLANDSHIRE	105
XIV.	ON A MAY DAY	111

0	07	V	T	$L^{*}$	Λ	7	$\tau$	C
[		v	/	F	/ 1	✓ .	1.	. 🥎

V	1

CHAPTER	EAG	
AV.	Salmon-fishing by Phonograph 12	3
XVI.	THE SALMON OF LOCH CARPETBAG 13	I
XVII.	TROUT PROBLEMS	I
XVIII.	A MAYFLY YARN	8
	PART II	
	SALT WATER	
I.	ANGLING IN SALT WATER 15	9
H.	PHOSPHORESCENT CONGERS	6
111.	TROUT-FISHING IN THE SEA 17	5
IV.	'Longside the Tangles	6
V.	OFF SUTHERLANDSHIRE 19	3
VI.	FLY-FISHING FROM THE ROCKS 20	3
VII.	THE BASS OF THE MAELSTROM 20	9





### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE LITTLE SKIPPER	Frontisp	iece
'A CERTAIN SWEET BERKSHIRE TROUT STREAM'.	to face p.	25
'THE MOUNTAIN-SURROUNDED LAKE'	,,	47
'THE KENNET SWIFT'	,,	78
FISH ABOUND IN THE REACH FROM THE SWAN		
INN UPWARDS'	,,	104
'WE CAME UPON A PRETTY RUSTIC SCENE'	,,	I 20
'where Shallow Succeeds Shallow'	,,	143
'IN THE SHADOW OF THE OLD APPLE TREE'	,,	150
'THE PLACE ITSELF SEEN IN BROAD SUNLIGHT,		
WITH LLAN IN THE FOREGROUND'	.,	168





# PART I FRESH WATER





### CHAPTER I

### THREE THAMES TROUT

NE day in April, some years ago, before

the Thames was disfigured and bereft of half its beauties by the hideous iron erections with which the conservators had thought proper to replace the picturesque old weirs, a young man might have been seen industriously holding his rod over one of the lashers near Marsh Lock, while the fierce rush of water beneath him kept the bait spinning rapidly, and more often out of the water than in it. He aspired to catch a Thames trout, but had hitherto not been successful. In those comparatively halcyon days, before the great invasion of the Thames by the steam water-carriages more particularly beloved of the snobocracy and beanfeasters, there was some pleasure in fishing for trout from the weir. Old water-stained and moss-grown camp-sheathing, kept up by ancient piles, surrounded the swirling pool, and supported a bank on which

grew the great burdock, blue forget-me-nots, meadowsweet, and the other wild flowers and weeds which lovers of the Thames know so well.

Two foaming, boiling, frothing streams leapt into the great pool, and it was in one of these that our friend believed that sooner or later a trout would take his bait. But the fish ignored his silvery bleak, and towards evening an old doctor—a noted fisherman in his day—strolled on to the weir and asked, with a twinkle in his eye, the question, 'What sport?'

The youth replied, with truth, 'Not much,' adding thereto the superfluous words 'at present.'

The doctor looked up and the doctor looked down, and close to an overhanging bush he noticed half a dozen minnows leap out of the water. 'You have a splendid rod,' he said; 'would you allow me to handle it?'

'It ought to be good,' drawled the youth; 'it cost a heap of money.'

'And perhaps you would allow me to take a cast with it?' said the old angler.

The youth had no objection, but rather thought casting a mistake.

The doctor readjusted the bait, drew some line off the reel—Nottingham reels were unknown on the Thames in those days—and with great care and precision sent the bleak through the air, and let it fall, with the smallest possible splash, close to the over-

hanging bush. Then he commenced to draw the line in rapidly, but before two coils had fallen on the grass there was a sudden check, the rod bent, and a lovely trout of some 4 lb. or 5 lb. weight leaped into the air. There followed a gallant fight. Right across the weir pool dashed the trout, as gamely as any salmon, and charged into the lasher, making a brave but futile attempt to get into the upper reach of the river. But no beginner was handling the rod. Erect and calm the old man stood, keeping the point of rod well up, bearing heavily on the fish when he approached a dangerous place, but dealing with him tenderly when in open water. At the end of some ten or twelve minutes the trout turned over on his side, and was brought close to the camp-sheathing. But the net was a small one, and the youth bungled. Fortunately the fish was well hooked.

'Hold the rod, sir,' said the doctor; 'hold the rod!'

The youth obeyed, and the more experienced of the two took the net, and in a moment the fish was landed.

At this point angling stories generally leave off, but to this one there is a short epilogue.

- 'Have you got anything to put the fish in?' queried the doctor.
  - 'Oh, yes,' said the other; 'I have a basket.'
- 'That's right; but you had better empty the things out of it.'

The youth obeyed, lined the basket with grass, and in it laid the fish.

'It's really very good of you to lend me your creel,' said the doctor; 'the trout is just what I wanted for a patient of mine!' and before the youth could find words to express what he very much wanted to say, the doctor had left the weir, taking trout and basket with him.

The feelings of that junior angler can, perhaps, be better imagined than described. For fully half an hour he sat and pondered; but then, having got into a thoroughly philosophical frame of mind, went home and told his friends how he had caught his first Thames trout, how Doctor K. had kindly assisted in landing it, and how he had generously presented the trout to the doctor for a sick friend.

It was some years after the capture of the doctor's trout that, walking one day over the horse bridge below Marsh Weir, I came upon a man of the bankangler class. He was fishing for roach, and had a second rod, quite fifty yards away from him, resting against the hand-rail of the bridge. On it was floattackle, baited with a live minnow, and evidently intended for trout. I ventured to ask the fisherman what would happen if a trout took the bait, and received the reply, in somewhat gruff tones, that he would have to take his chance. It strangely happened that the words were hardly out of his mouth, when

the float went under, the line rushed off the reel, and long before either of us could get near it, the rod was over the bridge and speeding down stream at a great rate. Fortunately the reel was of wood, and the rod a light bamboo cane, so they floated.

I had come up the river in a Canadian canoe, and it did not take me long to get aboard and paddle after the rod, but we were quite a third of the way to Henley before I could secure it. Then came another difficulty. The fish very strongly objected to be landed, and I had no net. But the greater the difficulty the greater the enjoyment if our efforts are crowned with success; and that trout certainly did give some sport, for the tackle was very weak, and the difficulty of playing the fish and managing the cockleshell of a canoe at the same time was considerable. But the end came. He could fight no more, and allowed me to lift him into the canoe. Then I paddled back to Marsh Weir, expecting to find the owner of the rod as pleased as I was to get the trout. But not a bit of it. Hardly had I landed before he cried out, 'That's my fish, you know. My tackle caught it; you only landed it. Come, hand it over!' And before I had time to throw it back into the river and tell him to go after it, he seized the trout and had it in his rush basket. Possibly he had heard the story I have related at the commencement of this chapter, and feared I was going to act like the old doctor.

The last, but not the least, of the three Thames trout may also be termed an accidental fish. Two of us were barbel-fishing in a weir pool, which even the best efforts of the conservators have failed to render unbeautiful. The day was everything that the angler could wish; but, though we began literally 'at dewy morn,' up to lunch-time we had not had one single bite. Even the dace and small perch left our lobworms alone, for which we were not ungrateful. About one o'clock a lad appeared on the bank bearing a luncheon basket, so we unmoored from the ryepecks, and gently slipped away without disturbing the baited swim.

'Possibly the jack may be feeding,' said the fisherman, who was as anxious that we should catch fish as we were.

At one place in the pool was a reedy little corner, where, when on the feed, there seemed nearly always a jack to be caught; before returning to the baited swim I rigged up a paternoster, and, with the aid of a bright little dace, had the satisfaction of landing a jack of about 5 lb. Then we returned to the barbel, rebaited our hooks, threw out the ledgers, laid down our rods, and commenced lunch. A few minutes later, when we were all somewhat busily engaged, one of the rods suddenly shot out of the punt into the pool, where fortunately it floated.

Fertility of resource is one of the most useful qualities a fisherman can possess, and one of us had

the wit to seize the jack rod, to which the paternoster was still attached, run some line rapidly off the reel, and make a cast in the direction of the floating rod, which was still within casting distance. The paternoster went over and beyond the rod, and, on being pulled in, by great good luck the hook caught in one of the rod rings. A minute later the erratic wand was on board, and it did not take long to discover that there was a fish on the line—a fish which still required a good deal of careful play. In due course it was brought alongside the punt, and proved to be, as we had all along suspected, a fine trout, which when weighed that evening, turned the scale at  $5\frac{1}{4}$  lb. The rest of that day's fishing may be told in a very few words. Though the swim had been well baited, it produced nothing but the trout; but on our way to the bank in the evening we managed to catch another jack, and thus ended our day's barbel-fishing.





### CHAPTER II

#### THE PROFESSOR AND THE SALMON

HERE was a certain fishery board which sadly felt the want of a man of science to assist the members in solving various fish problems, in which fin rays, pyloric

appendages, rows of scales, and the formation of gill covers had to be taken into consideration. There were very practical men on the board; some of them had caught tons of salmon with nets, others hundreds with rod and line. But bull trout puzzled them, and certain members inclined to curious views; for instance, that grilse never grew into salmon, but were a separate species. It was evident that some, even of the practical men, were wrong, for there were amazing differences of opinion. All could not be right, and some slight uneasiness prevailed.

It thus fell out that when the MacTanara said he thought his cousin, the professor of comparative anatomy, would be a great acquisition to the board, the practical men were pleased, and at once passed a resolution that he should be invited to become their scientific adviser—with a salary. But there was one, MacVickers, an obstructionist sort of a fellow, who objected to having comparative anatomy introduced into their deliberations. What use was a professor to them? a man who had probably never seen a salmon in his life, and had certainly never caught one. If he had, perhaps the MacTanara would say so; but that wily chieftain held his peace, and the majority, of course, had its way. The clerk was instructed to write to the professor.

The MacTanara was the owner of a fine Highland salmon river, and he invited his cousin, the professor, to spend Christmas with him and to see the fishspawning take place. The professor was a man who firmly believed himself intended by nature to be a great slayer of salmon and deer, but he was placed by circumstances in the close atmosphere of a large Scotch town. He had seen salmon at the fishmongers', but knew less about the habits of the fish and the ways they were caught than the most ignorant larrikin in Glasgow. Owing to the course his studies and lectures had taken, it happened that he had somewhat neglected ichthyology. When invited to become the scientific adviser of the fishery board, deeming that the points he might be called upon to deal with would present no insurmountable difficulties, he was inclined to jump at the offer as being one likely to give him opportunities of studying subjects which he felt he had, perhaps, somewhat foolishly neglected. But he would first visit his cousin, the MacTanara, and see salmon swimming about in the river. Perhaps he might even catch one and remove the reproach that he knew nothing of these fish, for he had been galled by reading the report of MacVickers' remarks in the *Highland Herald*.

On Christmas Eve, about lunch time, the professor arrived at Glenfynandhuloch and was met by his cousin, a tall, brawny, redbearded, kilted, middleaged man, very different in appearance from his guest, whose bent shoulders, dried-up looking face, and shambling gait told the story of a life devoted to study. The professor received a hearty Highland welcome, and was soon making a modest lunch in the low square dining-room of the lodge, which was slightly scented with peat reek from the glorious fire burning on the open hearth.

'Ye have come joost at the right time,' said the MacTanara; 'the so'mon are on the redds, and ye can see the whole performance; how the hen fish scatters her spawn on the gravel, and then her mate swims over the place and milts the eggs, and gives a swirl or two with his tail, and covers them oop with stones and sand. It's joost a fine sight.'

The professor wondered what 'redds' were, but he did not like to ask.

'We'll go up river after lunch,' continued his cousin, 'and I can show you more in half an hour than you would learn about so'mon from books in a twelvemonth.'

After lunch, unfortunately, the factor came in with a huge bundle of accounts, and a budget of business matters, which detained the laird indoors. But there was the salmon river, foaming amid rocks and boulders in sight of the lodge, and the professor, saying he would walk up its banks by himself, sallied forth, attired in his suit of respectable black, and with boots none too thick for the work.

It was dark before the MacTanara had completed the business with his factor. Where was the professor? No one had seen him. There were some places near the river which were particularly dangerous in winter time—boggy swamps into which a short-sighted man, especially if his spectacles were dimmed by the mist which was falling, might very easily flounder. Without delay the MacTanara took a stout stick and hastened up the river in search of his learned cousin. He had gone perhaps a mile when he suddenly found himself seized by three men.

'What in the Deil's name!' he began angrily; but ere he ended the sentence one of the fellows exclaimed, 'Eh, but it's the laird his ain sel,' and profuse apologies were offered.

'Who did you take me for?' asked the MacTanara of his assailants, whom he now saw were two police-

men and a river watcher. They explained that they had received information concerning a gang of poachers who intended to burn the water that night; and while coming down the river, just at dusk, they had happened upon two men in the act of cleeking salmon. The fellows dropped the cleek and ran away; the watcher and policemen gave chase, and in the darkness had mistaken the laird for one of the poachers.

Now, if there was one thing that excited the laird's wrath more than another, it was having his salmon snatched off the spawning beds in this way.

He at once forgot all about the professor, and joined in the chase. But what use is it to hunt a man, on a dark night, over moorland country? In less than half an hour all came to the conclusion that the best thing to be done was to watch the river and prevent any further depredations.

About seven o'clock the MacTanara returned to the lodge. The first person he met was Sandy Macdonald, the headkeeper, who followed him into the dining-room, shut the door closely, and then, with an air of great mystery, said, 'She hass come back.'

- 'Who?' asked the laird.
- 'The professor.'
- 'Where is he?'
- 'Well, she's joost hiding in the byre.'
- 'Why?'

'I don't weel know, sir.'

The explanation may now be given. The first happening to the professor, when he commenced walking up the river that afternoon, was a sudden immersion into an iron bog-a soft yellow thing caused by a spring of iron-charged water rising up through and colouring the soil. The professor went right down into it, well above his knees, and the unexpected bath worked an extraordinary change in his appearance. In struggling to get out, he plastered himself in various places with yellow mud, and even transferred some from his hands to his face. It is extraordinary what a change in a man's appearance a little bit of dirt will make. With the oncoming of the mud, the professorial air entirely departed. However, our friend was a man of some pluck, and not to be deterred from pursuing his investigations into the natural history of the salmonidæ by such an accident as this, so he plodded on, paying more attention now to the bank than to the water.

He found his long tail coat excessively awkward when clambering amid the boulders and heather, so tucked the tails up round his waist, buttoned the coat up tight, and, though presenting a somewhat curious appearance, was thenceforward little inconvenienced by his clothing. While clambering over a somewhat large piece of gneiss, the bough of a mountain ash gently tipped off his hat, which slid down the bank into the water. Now, it is a serious thing for a

professor to be without his hat, professors being more liable to take cold than other people. There was no chance of recovering the soft, black, flappy thing which had been whirled into the centre of the stream, and was hurrying seaward. As a more or less efficient substitute, he took out his red pocket handkerchief, knotted up the four corners, and placed it on his head. There was a slight mist falling, which caused him to turn up the collar of his coat, quite hiding the professorial white shirt-front and black tie. The yellow mud, from his feet up to above the knees, the shell jacket—for so the garment appeared with the tails in hiding—these, combined with his curious headgear, gave him a most extraordinary, not to say villainous, appearance. But he did not expect to meet anybody, and, having come to see the salmon spawn, would not turn back yet awhile.

Skirting the foot of a little cliff, which rose abruptly at a bend of the river, he came suddenly on a rough-looking man standing on rocks well out in the stream, and apparently attempting to hit something with a long stick which he had in his hand.

'Ah,' thought the professor, 'this must be one of my cousin's men salmon-fishing.'

The man in the river was awkwardly placed. He would have given a great deal to be able to run away; but, between him and liberty—represented in this case by the opposite bank—was some deep swift water, and he had the choice of returning to

dry land at the spot where stood the professor, or run the risk of being drowned. The former was the lesser evil of the two, and after awhile he suddenly jumped from rock to rock and landed on the bank by the side of the learned man.

'Well, have you caught any salmon?'

The man, prepared to run for it, was somewhat reassured by the friendly tones of the professor's voice, and judging from his appearance that he was perhaps of that class which does not bear the poacher any ill-will, replied that he had so far been unsuccessful, but thought that higher up the river there was a chance of getting a big fish. The professor pricked up his ears. Here was an opportunity not to be missed.

'I will give you,' he said, 'I will give you five, seven, no, ten shillings if you will enable me to hook a salmon; I very much want to catch one.'

The man gazed at him in amazement. Who could this be who offered gold to be shown how to break the law? However, the half-sovereign was worth having. He led his companion to a broad shallow where a pair of large fish were spawning, lent him his cleek, and, after giving very careful instructions how it should be used, helped the Professor of Comparative Anatomy to gaff and haul on to the bank a twenty-pounder. The good man, absolutely ignorant of his wrongdoing and the canons of sport, was delighted. Eggs were dropping from

the fish, and these he commenced examining carefully through a pocket microscope. He forgot the mud bath, the loss of his hat, and his wet feet.

Suddenly his companion caught hold of his arm and pulled him behind a rock.

- 'They're after us!' he exclaimed.
- 'Who?' asked the professor, opening his eyes very wide.
  - 'The police.'

'Why?' asked the professor; and during the succeeding fifteen seconds he learned, to his horror, that he had committed a serious offence against the fishery laws of Scotland. The man suggested that they two should steal across the moor by different ways, as they were almost certain to be discovered if they remained behind the rock. The professor, less fearful of the law than that his innocent poaching practices should ever become known to the fishery board, or in his university, took to his heels and ran. The police soon viewed him, and gave hot chase. If he had been a better runner, he would probably have been caught; but, being quite unused to the rough country over which he was passing, he very soon tripped up, fell, and, to his surprise, found himself sinking through the heather into a very convenient hiding-place between two big rocks. His first impulse was to arise and continue his flight, his second to stop where he was. In this he was wise.

The police, like greyhounds, running by sight rather than by scent, passed within a couple of yards of him, and were soon a mile distant. He lay there for an hour, and then, in the darkness, he somehow (he never knew exactly by what means) groped his way back to the lodge. On the way he had to endure many a fall, and not a few immersions into icy pools of water; his garments were rent with thorns, his spectacles were broken, his hair was dishevelled, and his face was scratched. On the whole, he was a very poor specimen of a professor by the time he reached Glenfynandhuloch.

Afraid that the police had preceded him, he hid himself in the byre, where Sandy Macdonald found him. He confessed his sins to the MacTanara, was bathed and put to bed, and lay ill at the lodge for a week. Then he went back to his university. He declined the post of scientific adviser to the fishery board, and now never passes a fishmonger's shop without a shudder.





### CHAPTER III

### FIN-DE-SIÈCLE FISH

ACKNEYED as the term has become, fin de siècle, as applied to what have been called by florid writers 'finny denizens of aqueous habitats,' is a not alto-

gether inappropriate expression. Fin-de-siècle fish are of no special variety. They may be found chiefly among the non-migratory Salmonidæ and coarse fish of our rivers. They are one of the outcomes of our civilisation, and usually dwell not far distant from great centres of population. Hampshire knows them well, as also does the Thames, Colne, and Lea valleys. Dartymoor, as the natives love to call it, can account for many of the variety, and the anglers of Yorkshire vales and Derbyshire dales are fully acquainted with their peculiarities.

The chief characteristic of a *fin-de-siècle* fish is his extreme distrust of man. If a trout, the angler who would catch him must absolutely grovel and act

more like a Red Indian on the war-path than a respectable citizen who on Sundays wears a tall silk hat. Fancy grovelling before a fish! The only other way is to attack him under cover of darkness, but that is by many considered an unsportsmanlike proceeding. A fish which has escaped grovellers and others during the day, should certainly be allowed to pass his nights in peace.

The following is the true history of a fin-de-siècle trout which was caught without grovelling. He was an old and wise fish, and had his head-quarters opposite a clubhouse on a certain famous stream. Many a fly had passed over his venerable head. Once long ago it is said that he was hooked on a piece of bread, but quickly wound the line round a stump, extracted the hook, and was rising to some natural flies half an hour afterwards. New members used to bet that they would catch him. The old members took their bets and their money, and obtained satisfaction out of the fish that way. It was an aggravating feature in that trout's behaviour that nothing would put him down short of a cart rope thrown over his head. He was as tame as a pug dog, but had the cunning, without the wildness, of a hawk.

One day there joined the club a man who was not expert with the fly rod. He, like the rest, said he thought he could catch the trout. The old members laughed and took his bets, as was their custom with new-comers. A mean thing this, but very much the way of the world.

It was August. One sultry evening the new member came to the club armed with a peashooter and many bluebottles. Was he going to catch the trout with a peashooter? No; he was only going to begin to catch him—the operation might take some time. Deftly a half-dead bluebottle was puffed out of the tube in front of the fish. It was taken, of course, as everything eatable from a trout's point of view was taken. The fish had a rare supper that evening.

The following day the new member repeated the operation. He fed the fish in this manner for more than a week; the others smiled and looked on.

'I will catch him soon,' said the new member.
'I am only waiting for wind.'

At the end of three weeks there came a day when a stiff breeze was blowing up-stream. It was the day on which the catastrophe was fated to happen. The new member appeared at the clubhouse with a long, slender rod, on which was arranged running tackle and a length of fine but strong gut, terminating with a single hook. He took his stand some distance below the fish, and began feeding him as usual. On the hook was a bluebottle. Good luck helped our friend, who, however, exhibited considerable skill. The up-stream breeze took the hooked fly just over the trout, and the new member

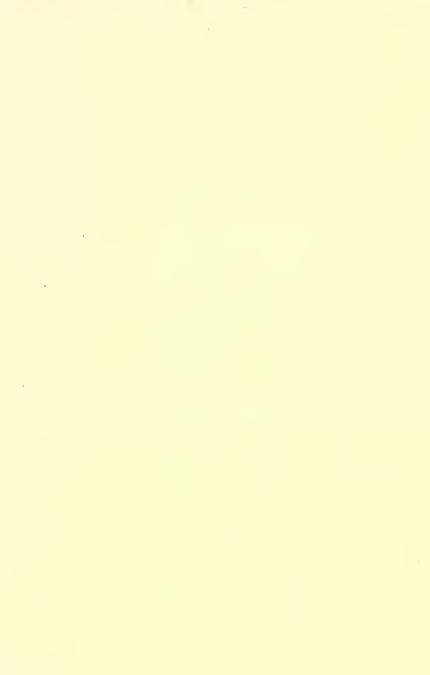
let it fall, and at the same time puffed a fly out of the tube.

Which would the trout take? It was an anxious moment. Had the rod been in front instead of behind him, he would have taken neither. But he did not see the rod, having no eyes in his tail (this has been questioned), and the fly containing the hook was sucked in. How he fought! Was the wisdom of twenty years to culminate in destruction by means of a peashooter and a bluebottle? Where was that invaluable stump? The new member had removed it. The weeds? They had been recently cut. A leap for liberty, then? That made matters worse, for the line got wound round his body and hampered him sadly. But let fall the curtain! He died-as wise and grand and noble a specimen of a fin-de-siècle fish as has ever been seen in trout stream

Salmon, too, in these days seem occasionally more difficult to catch than in the times of our fore-fathers—that is, if our fore-fathers are to be believed. I have seen a big fish come up slowly from the bottom of a deep pool, swim right round a fly, examine it from every point of view except a bird's, and go to the bottom again. Clearly that was a fin-de-siècle creation. But, speaking generally, the migratory fish, which pass the greater portion of their existence in the sea, have not quite the same edu-

cational advantages as trout or coarse fish which pass their lives in river or lake. Certainly when a salmon's education commences, it proceeds apace. A fish which has been offered half the contents of a fly book, a phantom minnow or two, and a preserved prawn, begins to have some ideas on the subject of salmon-fishing, and to act accordingly. Roach, dace, perch, and jack, according to the old writers, had the reputation of being easily caught. They have now, however, among them a very large proportion of *finde-siècle* veterans.

Among the jack in well-fished rivers are many individuals of the fin-de-siècle variety. Indeed, in the Thames, I am beginning to think that they are all of that refined breed. As an instance of fin-de-siècle jack, I may mention some experiences in a backwater The place was full of small fish, one winter. averaging from 2½ lb. to 5 lb.—possibly there were a few rather larger. I often saw them feeding, chasing the roach fry hither and thither; but it was some time before I discovered that they were of the fin-de-siècle kind. Large baits, on tackle however fine, they would not look at, the reason being that there were no large roach or other coarse fish in the backwater. The only bait they would take was a two-year-old roach or dace -a little thing two or three inches in length. They knew a large dace or roach had no business in that water, but when they saw a small bait they thought it was all right. Before the end of the century they





"A CERTAIN SWEET BERKSHIRE TROUT STREAM."

will doubtless be wiser still. I must admit, however, that occasionally a jack would be tempted into seizing a dace of moderate size; but, as a rule, even if he so far forgot himself, he was almost invariably careful to take the bait by the extreme end of the tail and far from the triangles, so that there was no chance of getting hooked.

There is a certain sweet Berkshire trout stream on the banks of which I once dwelt, and so rubbed shoulders almost with trout and grayling. The fish were of the fin-de-siècle variety. Once, when a brace of fish were urgently required to appease the appetite of an unexpected guest, the sun being high and the day cloudless, I bethought me of a leaded minnow just dropped over the sedges and worked with a sink and draw motion. There was a tuft of sedge under which always lay a trout. Here I dropped my minnow, and, looking cautiously into the water, saw the play of St. Anthony re-enacted. How that trout. was sorely tempted! He darted at the minnow, retreated, twisted round and came from the other side, wriggled, flashed here, dashed there, bringing his nose within an eighth of an inch of the fatal hooks. For fully half a minute the temptation lasted, and then, like St. Anthony, the trout gained a victory over his baser nature and sulked under the tuft of sedge.

There is an abundance of fish in England; but anglers overrun Ireland, Scotland, and Norway to get

away from our too highly civilised and educated finde-siècle 'finny denizens.'

Closely allied to these curious products of the end of the nineteenth century are what I may term 'queer fish.' Not dwellers in Oueer-Street, or land sharks, or anything of the kind, but bonâ fide water fish. Let me first mention a certain pike, an insignificant little thing, which just turned the scales at a couple of pounds. It seized a three-inch spoon at a time when it (the pike) had in its belly a trout weighing exactly a pound; nor am I quite correct in saying 'in' its belly, for the tail of the trout was almost out of its mouth. I exhumed the trout, which, beyond looking blue about the head, was none the worse from my point of view for its descent into such an infernal region. That same evening both trout and its captor —by which I mean the pike and not myself—were eaten. Now, was not that a queer fish? What, I wonder, would he have done, supposing the spoon had really been a nice juicy young rudd or bream? His belly was full to overflowing—certainly no room for any more—and yet he took that bait—one pound of food in a body of two pounds!

Supposing we ate in the same proportion? My dear friend Blunderbore is a large eater, and weighs certainly not less than 12 stone, but could he emulate that pike? Could he put away 6 stone of food at a meal, and ask for more?

There was another queer fish which came out of the same water, whose conduct was most peculiar. I was spinning away one day with the aforementioned spoon, when this pike came at it and got hooked. When I brought him up to the boat side, behold! there was an eel on one of the hooks of the same triangle by which the pike was caught. The hook was not fairly in the eel's mouth, but pushed through both its lips. I had heard of eels running at spoon baits, but had never taken one that way, so at once concluded that the eel had first got caught, and that the pike had seized the bait rendered doubly attractive by the eel, immediately afterwards. One thing puzzled me, and that was the odd fact that the eel was almost dead.

The pike were running well, and it was not until we landed to lunch that I examined the eel carefully. Then I found teeth marks, and that the strong digestive juices of the pike had been at work. The mystery was a mystery no longer. The pike had swallowed the eel, or a part of it, and when being played endeavoured to clear out its interior—a habit with many fish—with the result that the eel, while being thrown up, caught on the hook of the triangle in the manner I have described.

A Thames pike, with which I became acquainted a good many years ago now, was a *bonâ fide* queer fish. I was more or less of a youngster then, and was spending a summer at one of the prettiest spots on

the Upper Thames. Stopping at a riverside inn was an angler who nearly every evening brought home about a brace or more of jack, and the confident manner in which he spoke of catching these fish used to annoy me, more especially as he never would tell me how he caught them. One afternoon, just as he was starting, the inn cat was seen rushing madly about, with something sticking out of her mouth. She was caught, and the evil thing was found to be a dead-gorge trolling hook.

Having seen the tackle used by the would-bemysterious angler, I read up 'trolling' in all the fishing books I could lay hands on, then induced a friendly local fisherman to rig me up some tackle and give me a few baits, and the next morning I started early to troll round some islands where jack were said to be fairly abundant. I took a lad with me to manage the boat. As often happens with beginners, I had very fair sport (many a day since have I trolled round those islands without getting a run), and before three o'clock had taken three jack and lost several others. Then entered on the fluvial stage the queer fish, which I have been so long coming to. He seized the bait gently, never stirred a foot, and, when I struck at the end of the orthodox eight minutes, he simply opened his mouth and out dropped the tackle.

Now, that was not so very queer, but I was rather astonished, on trying the place again, to find the bait

again taken, and to go through exactly the same performance. Strangely enough, the same thing occurred a third time, my bait coming up almost as fresh as it went down, a few teeth marks showing on its sides. I gave up this pike as a bad job, but dropped in my bait a fourth time, and worked it once or twice near the bottom without result. But just as the bait was being lifted out of the water, a good-sized jack sprung a foot or so above the surface, seized it, descended with it to the bottom, and there lay quietly.

The fish, having presumably seen me, I concluded that he was not likely to pouch the bait, but I determined to be even with him if possible, and this was how I managed it. At the end of about ten minutes, instead of striking, I took the gaff in one hand and the line in the other, and laid down on my stomach in the bows of the boat, with my head close to the water. The pike was not more than five yards away, and the water was about four feet deep. The day was sunny and the water clear, so that I could see right down to the bottom. Noticing the course taken by the line, I bade the lad slowly push the boat forward (we were lying close alongside an island), and gently gathered in the line as we proceeded. As we came over the opening in the weeds, I espied the knot where the running line joined the gimp, and knew the pike was not far off, and in a moment I saw him lying under the bank, his side touching those reeds, and with the bait across his mouth. Then I—after this length of time I hope I shall not be prosecuted for it, but anyway a fish story is not evidence—slowly dropped the gaff hook in the water, pulled up my sleeve, managed to get the point of the hook under the jack's lower jaw, and with a jerk brought up my friend from his lair into the boat. He was a queer fish. Perhaps he thought me a queer angler.

I could tell of many other queer fish besides these. There was a perch which swallowed first the plummet of my paternoster, and afterwards seized the minnow on the lowest hook; a roach which took a minnow; a perch which rose to a Mayfly, and was in its turn seized by a pike; a pike which took a cheese bait intended for chub; and a trout which—but enough. I will only add that in the foregoing relation I have carefully refrained from exaggerating a single incident.





### CHAPTER IV

#### THIRTY-FIVE FEET OF PIKE

the most likely part of England in which to get a good day's pike or any other fishing; but there was a time when that

Black Country was green country, and in those halcyon days a band of worthy monks made for themselves a vast artificial lake, with accompanying stews and breeding ponds, so that on Fridays and other fast days a proper supply of fish should be forthcoming. Generations of monks came and went, and the lake in those pious hands was ever teeming with pike, carp, and perch. Then came a troublous time for monastic establishments. The old ivy-clad buildings were levelled, a castle rose in their place, and the monks' fish preserve became the ornamental water of a park.

Father Time, the only discoverer of perpetual motion, still went on his way. Great pits were

opened, and huge furnaces belched out volumes of black smoke over the once beautiful country. park remained an oasis in that grimy desert. one day the owner of this beautiful spot was stricken with coal fever. Experimental borings were made, coal was discovered, shafts were sunk, and the park was given up to the miner. The castle was turned into a semi-charitable institution, but the lake was not filled up with ashes or pit refuse, nor polluted with all kinds of mixtures known commonly as 'washings.' In the midst of this scene of desolation the sheet of water, with its rushy margins and overhanging trees, remained a thing of beauty, a monument to the good sense of the monks, and a delightful place of recreation to the inmates of the aforesaid charitable institution and persons connected with it.

As, after a short railway journey, W. and I drove in a hansom cab towards the monks' lake, there was a glint of sunshine which lighted up the faces of the pallid workers who hurried by us along the grimy streets. But over the horizon in the direction we were taking, hung a blackish-blue cloud, which I, knowing nothing of the local weather signs, imagined to foretell a deluge of rain. W., smiling at my ignorance, told me it was merely the cloud of smoke and vapour which for ever hangs over the town of coal and metal. I was beginning to disbelieve in the possibility of pike-fishing in the midst of such surroundings, when the cab stopped before two huge

prison-like gates, which were opened by a wanlooking woman (everyone looks wan and pale in that land of little sunshine), and we turned into a carriagedrive by the side of which rose a few dying trees, which had the appearance of having been struck by lightning, but which were simply being choked by the vile atmosphere.

Soon we pulled up near a melancholy-looking mansion, with the inmates of which I deeply sympathised, unloaded the cab, passed through a small shrubbery, and suddenly came upon as fishy-looking a piece of water as the angler could wish to see. Drawn up an opening cut through the rushes was a capital Hampshire punt, and by the side of it was a fish box, which we soon discovered contained a goodly supply of small gudgeon. Large bait were supposed to be the correct thing, so W. very good-naturedly went to fish for roach, leaving me to do the best I could with the gudgeon.

It was about the middle of October, and here and there were the partially decayed leaves of clumps of waterlilies. The bottom was covered with a short growth of feathery weed. Mooring the boat near one of the lily beds, I commenced to paternoster far and wide, and, having covered as much water as I could reach, tried another spot in the same manner. But no pike was attracted by my bait, and W. advised me to fish round the edges of a very shallow bay, where, on previous occasions, he had found plenty of

pike. Near the rushes I found there was not more than a foot of water, and was about to cry out to my friend that it was not the least use trying there, when I had a run, and landed a fish of about 3 lb. He came at the bait with a rush, and almost swallowed it instantly. The hook, which I had some difficulty in extracting, was right at the back of his throat. In a few minutes I had another fish of about the same size, but returned him as well as the first one to the water. W. had said so much to me of the vast store of pike in the lake, that for the fun of the thing I determined to mark off the fish along the side of the punt, so as to see, if we had a good catch, how many feet of fish we should take before evening.

As I worked the punt round the edges of this shallow bay, I noticed that a good many fish were disturbed by my punt pole, and, thinking that they were not taking very kindly to the gudgeon on the paternoster, determined to try spinning—a method which, in suitable places, has always, so far as my experience goes, yielded the best sport. While I was getting out a Chapman spinner, I laid my paternoster in the centre of the bay, and was rewarded with still another fish, which was duly measured along the gunwale and returned, not being quite up to the size we had decided to be keepable in that water.

The spinning tackle proved a great success. At the first cast I had a run with a fish of about 4 lb., which was measured and knocked on the head. Just at that moment one of our two hosts arrived, and came into the boat with me. We then moored in the middle of the same bay, and he paternostered while I spun. I do not remember how many fish I landed while we were at anchor in that spot, but the Chapman spinner took quite four fish for every one hooked on the paternoster. The remarkable thing was that all the feeding fish were in exceedingly shallow water, and the same spots were spun over again and again with success. Very soon my marks on the gunwale of the boat reached from stem to stern, and before we had lunch I had turned the corner and was on the way home again.

Casting my bait towards a willow tree, where there was certainly not more than a foot of water, and where I had spun my bait already at least a dozen times and had taken three fish, I had a run from a pike of rather larger size than any of the others caught that day, and after some fine sport landed him with my hand, the net not being large enough for the purpose, and the gaff having been left at home. He weighed under 10 lb., so it will be seen that the water did not afford us very large fish. In fact, I have no reason to suppose that it contained any monsters. It was the quantity of pike which was so amazing. They were everywhere, and the way they rose at the spinning bait was splendid. Casting it over a shallow, they would come at it at once, faster even than a salmon usually takes the fly, and they were quite the gamest fish of their species that I have ever played. Lake pike, as a rule, are not so game as those of rivers, but these fought like water tigers.

The noise of the steam hooters in the surrounding factories informed us when lunch-time had arrived. and after that meal our other host came to see what we were doing, and took me all over the water in the punt. He told me how he intended introducing fresh blood among the pike, thinking it not improbable that the fish had deteriorated in size, having interbred for ages. As the lake swarms with roach and perch, lack of food could hardly be the reason. He also told me how he had made a remarkable take of perch there with a small spoon, cast and worked on a fly rod. I forget the numbers killed and their weight, but both were noteworthy. The fish almost jostled one another to get the bait, but it did not appear that any jumped into the punt after it. He had already done something to improve the breed of perch by hatching ova brought from Scotland. In one of the stews he had intended to rear some white trout, which had been hatched from eyed ova; but unfortunately the stew was not water-tight at the time it was wanted, and the fry had to be turned into the lake among the pike. It will be interesting to see if any survive.

While chatting of these things I fished on, but did not have nearly so many runs in the deeper waters of the lake as I had had in the shallow bay. Not that the water was too deep for spinning, being nowhere more than about ten feet. At half-past four we had reluctantly to leave off fishing. My pike score had not quite reached round the boat, but, on measuring the length of fish landed to my own rod, found that it amounted to thirty-five feet.

But I am forgetting something my host told me, which I am particularly anxious to commend to the attention of pothunters.

'That,' said he, pointing to a fishy-looking corner by some waterlilies, and overhung by a willow, 'that was the most certain place in the lake to get a pike. But one day a man came to fish here who took out of it twenty-seven, big and little, every one of which he killed, and since that day we hardly ever take a pike there.'





## CHAPTER V

#### IN THE MURGTHAL

HERE is no more charming river in the Black Forest than the Murg, and few angling quarters more comfortable and picturesquely situated than Gernsbach. I

have a very vivid recollection of my first visit to the Murgthal. On one pleasant June morning, while the dew was yet on the grass, I started from Baden-Baden with two brother-countrymen, D. and R., on an eight-mile walk through the forest. That was not the least enjoyable part of the day. The sun had not long risen, and the air was still and cool. The country was very beautiful, the fresh greens of spring lighting up the sombre pine-woods, which clad the hills from base to summit, and from among which, here and there, peeped ruins of battlement and turret, once strongholds of mighty German barons, now the stock attractions of a German watering-place. In the windows of one of these old castles were placed

Æolian harps, which sadly wanted tuning, and, when the wind blew across their strings, gave out a multitude of discordant sounds.

But our business was not with Æolian harps that morning. Skirting the Merkur, a mountain so called because of a stone on its summit said to be an altar once erected in honour of Mercury, we soon reached the gap between the hills, the highest point in our journey, and looked down into the valley of the Murg. At our feet, divided into two parts by the river, lay a quaint old village, consisting of half-timbered cottages, a picturesque church, and an old red-brick courthouse, on one chimney of which a stork stood motionless, as if keeping guard over the mass of dead wood which, among storks, answers the purposes of a nest. Through the valley and dividing the village into two parts wound the shining river, disappearing in the blue mist which obscured the distant Rhine plains. It was truly a ravishing prospect, and, anxious as we all three were to cast our lines over the glittering water, we stopped for a time to take in our fill of the beautiful scene.

Some year or two later, I was standing with an artist friend on the same spot in autumn. My companion, who had not long before been journeying through Italy, declared he had never yet seen a land-scape which pleased him as did this one.

In a half-hour's time we had descended the gentle incline which leads to the village, and made our way

to the Gasthof zum Krone. The host of that comfortable inn gave us all necessary information about the fishing, and sent out for the necessary tickets. The charge is, or used to be, only a few shillings a month—ten marks, I think, for fishing the water in the immediate vicinity of Gernsbach. The innkeeper, with possibly an eye to business, advised us to fish up stream as far as a little chapel in the morning, and to spend the afternoon on the lower portion of the water, which is deeper and contains larger fish, thereby, of course, passing his inn about lunch time.

Neither D. nor R. had rods, but as they were only at Baden-Baden for a few days, I lent one my fly rod, and the other a pike rod and Devon minnow. I officiated with the landing-net. I had fortunately brought from England a good stock of flies recommended by the late Mr. Francis Francis for German streams. They proved excellent killers both on that day and subsequent occasions. They were as follows: The Wickham, soldier palmers of two or three sizes for coloured water, the sedge for evening, the red tag (red palmer with ruby silk tag)—a good grayling fly anywhere; furnace and bumbles; the oak fly for coloured water; March browns and alders for the spring; also yellow duns for still, bright weather, and general utility in the shape of black and silver palmers.

D. is a hardy north-countryman, and a capital fly fisherman. He was soon at work, scrambling through

the foaming water along a rough, low weir, one of several erected in the Murg to keep up the water sufficiently to allow the long narrow rafts of hewn pines to float down from the forest to the Rhine. R. did the best he could from the bank with the pike rod. I looked on. The sun was now shining brightly, and there was not a ripple on the deeper parts of the river, so that it was evidently useless to fish anywhere but in the rougher portions of the stream.

I had not long to wait before my services were required. Almost simultaneously came shouts from D. and R., both of whom were in fish. A glance sufficed to show me that whatever R. might have hooked on the minnow, it was not a trout, for, disregardless of the value of Devon baits in the Black Forest, he had hauled the fish to the top of the water, where it was kicking and splashing. I therefore hastened across the slippery weir to the assistance of D., and a pretty little trout of about \( \frac{3}{4} \) lb. was soon in the net. The fish gave good sport, for the tackle was very fine and the stream strong. I remained on the weir until D. had fished the whole of it, and much regretted I had no waders with me, for the water was icy cold. To make a good bag in the Murg anglers must wade, and that is a thing worth remembering before leaving England. The weir and scours beneath it fished—result, one more trout of about ½ lb.—D. and I rejoined R., who showed a quaint mixture of irritation for having been left without the landingnet, and joy in the capture of a 4 lb. chub. Like many an honest angler before us we wetted the first fish, a fact I should not have thought worthy of record but for the contents of our flask—Kirsch-wasser, a spirit made in the Black Forest from cherries. When good it is excellent; when inferior detestable.

The little weir from which D. killed the brace of trout is about a hundred vards distant from the bridge. Above that is an island, on one side of which the river is deep and unfishable. Leaving R. to try below the weir and round the bridge for chub, D. and I proceeded to fish the left side of the island, where the water rushes and boils among large rocks and boulders. Here D. picked up three small trout, rising and losing several more. Above the island we found better water, but there D. had only one rise-not a short one—and another half-pounder was added to the basket. R. now joined us, triumphantly carrying four chub, though none so large as the one first caught. He said they swarmed round the bridge, but grew shy after a few had been hooked. They certainly took the minnow very well.

The landlord of the Krone told me on another occasion that a Frenchman, who was in the habit of coming to Gernsbach every year, fishing from the bridge, caught large quantities of weis fische, as chub and other coarse fish are called in Germany, the bait used being half a ripe plum skinned. It reminded me of a certain lock island up the Thames, where a

cherry tree overhangs a chub-hole, which is thus kept baited with cherries, and where, in the right season, a cherry containing a hook, cautiously dropped on the water, will often lure a mighty chub to his doom. D. now resigned me the fly rod, but I did little good with it until we reached a swirling pool, close by which stands a tiny chapel, the limit of the Gernsbach water. Here I felt sure some good trout must lie, but I fished for some time very carefully without a rise.

'I vote for some lunch at the Krone,' said R.

'One cast more and we'll—by Jove, I'm in a fish!'

I had dropped my flies into one of the more quiet corners of the pool where a gravelly bank sloped rather sharply into the water, indicating a depth of several feet. My fish was evidently not a chub, and at the same time it did not play like a trout. In a few minutes, however, the mystery was solved. A graceful grayling lay gasping on the river's bank. Though so early in the year, the fish was in first-rate condition, so it went into the creel, now tolerably heavy. It was my first grayling, and came as a great surprise, none of us having the remotest idea that any were to be found in the Murg. I am now, from subsequent sport I had there, inclined to think that river would afford some really good grayling-fishing, if properly fished, and at the right season.

What pleasant days to look back upon are those

on which the first fish of any kind was caught. I can well remember, though it is more than a quarter of a century ago, the very first fish I ever hooked: a roach in the pretty little pond at Bonchurch, Isle of Wight. Then, later, my first perch, in Godstone Millpond; a Ringwood jack; trout in the upper Dart, and so, mounting up each round of the angling ladder, reaching nearly the summit in a Shannon salmon—I say nearly the summit, for tarpon mahseer and Silurus glanis have yet to come; I must confess I am not anxious about the latter.

After landing the grayling, nothing appearing to be on the feed, not even the ubiquitous weis fische, we wended our way to the Krone, and partook of a Black Forest dish—blue trout. It is prepared in this wise:—Into the saucepan put one pint of white wine and one pint of water; as soon as the mixture boils, take a live trout out of the fish box (most Black Forest inns possess a fish box), devote thirty seconds to cleaning, and throw it into the boiling liquor. The fish curls up, as newly killed fish always do, and at the end of a few minutes comes out covered with a bluish bloom, such as one sees on black hothouse grapes. I can commend the method. When wine is not available, try vinegar. Some say there is little difference, but this may be sarcasm; personally, I prefer the wine.

We did not linger long over lunch, and commenced fishing the lower portion of the water early in the afternoon. Quite content with my grayling, I gave up fly rod to D. for the rest of the day, but had a few casts with the minnow, near the bridge, bringing to creel a small trout of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb., and two chub, weighing together, I should think, some 4 lb. or 5 lb. The Murg is, or was (it has been heavily fished since this day of mine), a good trout stream, and it would be first-rate if it were only cleared of those hungry chub.

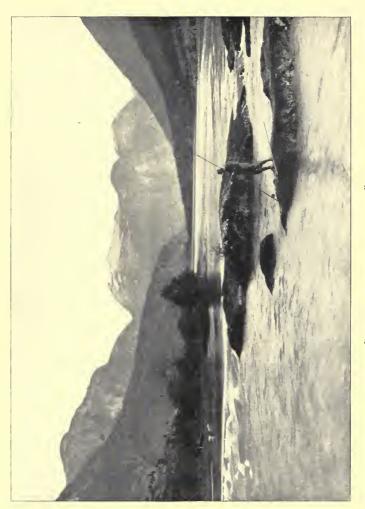
Below the village the river widens somewhat. On the side nearest Baden-Baden it runs fairly deep, and is overhung in places by bushes. The other side is shallow, and to get the larger fish the best plan is to wade out on the shallow, and cast near the opposite bank. Of course, this cannot be done to advantage unless there is a good breeze, or, failing a ripple, late in the evening after dusk. The wind had risen during the afternoon, and the deep pools on the opposite shore were fishable, so that D., who inherited from Yorkshire ancestors a pair of stork-like legs, valuable in the extreme for wading purposes, was able with a long line to fish all the best water. Towards evening the fish began to rise well, and a really fine bag of trout would certainly have fallen to D., but we had to leave early as we were wet to our waists, and driving to Baden, as we had intended, was put out of the question. Almost the last cast D. made resulted in a brace of trout, both rather over than under \frac{1}{2} lb. Wading out hurriedly with the net to his assistance, I stumbled over a stone, and very nearly had a ducking.

The Germans are not expert fishermen, and our show of fish created no little excitement at the Krone, where we stopped for *abend-essen* before starting on our tramp through the forest. There were altogether fifteen trout, a grayling, and twenty-six chub. The latter fish R. insisted on carrying home; but then he had never eaten chub, and would not believe our account of their edible qualities. Now, there is just one way to make a chub eatable—which is to fillet, egg and bread crumb, and *fry him in butter the very day he is caught*.

Fortified by a good meal and a draught of Affenthaler (the best 'wine of the country'), we left Gernsbach about nine o'clock. Passing through Baden-Baden, wild youths that we were, we loosed numerous latches holding shutters, which fell with a noise like small artillery. Then we took to our heels, for the German police are stern and alert. It was long past midnight before we arrived, thoroughly tired out, within the hospitable walls of Forest Castle, our temporary home. I had many pleasant days on the Murg after this, but none more enjoyable than that on which I caught my first grayling.







"THE MOUNTAIN-SURROUNDED LAKE."



# CHAPTER VI

#### A GLACIER SALMON RIVER

GREAT field of everlasting snow-ice many feet thick and many miles round: that is the source of my beautiful glacier river. When the sweet springtime omes in Scandinavia, and the ice-king looses his

comes in Scandinavia, and the ice-king looses his hand and the snow melts, then down each valley come pouring snow-white foaming rivulets, which, ever adding to the river, help to form a great roaring torrent. The first great rush of the snow-broth being over, the salmon and sea trout, which have been lying in the fjord, begin to force their way into fresh water, and soon tenant the series of grand pools which lie between the mountain-surrounded lake and the tideway. Then there comes the outbursting of spring flowers, which few English tourists see, and the valleys are filled with scent and colour. All the snow gradually melts, except patches lying high amid hollows of the mountains; from these, when the

sun shines, or during warm rain, little streamlets trickle down the face of the mountain. But it is the steady melting of the glacier all through the summer which keeps up the river to that level which rejoices the heart of the salmon and sea-trout fisher.

There is not a pool in the river which has not a history. One near the lake lies between a waterfall. or fos, and a great raging rapid, into which a hooked salmon once passing, has chances of freedom almost as great as those of an enslaved Nubian when first placing foot on English shores. Late in the year salmon congregate in this pool and rest before attempting to shoot the falls and make their way into the great lake. So those who knew it deemed it a sure place for a fish. I had one short season on this charming river, and each time my fly-in itself about as large as a north-country brown trout—swam over those turbulent waters, my hopes rose high, and I confidently expected the pull which never came. By repute it was almost the best cast on the river, and vet during that season it yielded only one solitary rise from a misanthropic, irritating, brown kipper, which touched the extreme tip of the fly's wing and was seen no more. It was H. who, years before, had discovered the right way to fish this piece of water, namely, with sturdy rod, treble salmon gut, and large stout hook to his fly; and after him the place was named, but I venture to dub it, 'The Pool that Failed?

I loved to fish that pool; the surrounding scenery was so lovely. Even if the fish rose not, which was, as I have said, their invariable custom, it was easy to stroll a few yards up the valley to the big lake, borrow a somewhat leaky craft from an obliging farmer, and catch char and brown trout. Not far distant was the Pool of the Silver Birches, which once yielded a fifty pounder, and to me a wild Norsk kipper of 26 lb. I was sitting one day by the side of the Pool that Failed, resting-not a fish, but myself-when a little hunchback came strolling up, and with courteous manner asked me in fairly good English what sport I had enjoyed. I endeavoured to explain that though sport was wanting, certain elements of enjoyment were still present, and we fell a-chatting. He had never talked much with English people, but the previous winter had gone to the priest's night school, and there learned English.

Surely there must be something wrong in the way foreign languages are taught in our schools at home. We go to school at an early age, absorb doses of nauseous French and German grammars, do German into English and English into German, and French into English and English into French; and what is the outcome of it all? At the end of many years about five per cent, of us can read an easy French novel with the aid of a dictionary. Surely we begin at the wrong end, and make the mistake of not

learning foreign languages as we do our own; that is to say, leaving grammar, spelling, and style until we have mastered the speech. Russians, Hungarians, Austrians, Norwegians, and Swiss all learn our language rapidly and without apparent difficulty; and we—well, we English are not accomplished linguists. As I believe our heads, brains, and understanding are as good as those of any foreigner, surely the fault must be in the system and not in the breed.

After the best of the salmon-fishing was over, in July, then great sea trout, anything you liked between I lb. and 20 lb., came rollicking up from the sea, and for a month or more gave as good sport as the most exigent fly fisher could wish for in this good world of ours. They were tantalising fish, these, on some days, particularly if they had been in fresh water a week or more. For two hours I tried to catch one big fellow of about 8 lb. or 9 lb. I rose him times innumerable—if, indeed, his appearance a yard or two behind the fly could be deemed a rise—and left him at last in disgust, still inquisitive as before as to the manner in which my various flies were tied.

Higher up the river, one day while salmon-fishing, I broke my rod by trying to play a rock, so, with the middle and top joint only available, came down to the lower reaches and endeavoured to catch some of these large sea trout. Casting the fly was the easiest

part of it; it was after the fly had been seized that the fun, if it may be so called, began. With my wreck of a rod I felt the power of the fish. Sport in angling is very much what we like to make it. Catch one of those fine sea trout on an eleven foot trout rod with ordinary lake gut, and your fight with him will be a thing to remember for a lifetime.

Talking of fights, we had a lady angler on the river—H.'s married daughter—who deprived our sails of wind by catching the largest salmon of the season. It was a great triumph for her, as she was using a grilse rod, a somewhat ancient single gut cast and a small double-hooked salmon fly. Some slanderer did, indeed, spread a tale that an artificial prawn had been picked up a few days later on the bank of the river near where this big fish was caught, and that the lady's initials were engraved on its back. The story was improbable as it was untrue, for there was no greater scorner of unsportsmanlike methods (in which, if you please, the lady included all and every method of fishing in which the artificial fly was not an essential) than this fair slayer of salmon.

Her little son, too, was being brought up in the right (fluvial) path, and might be seen in a boat on the tidal pools any morning early, wielding a heavy trout rod, while we lazy ones were dozing in those wooden boxes which serve as beds in Norwegian inns. It seemed, indeed, at one time as if not only would the mother catch the largest salmon, the weight of

which, bye-the-bye, was 29 lb., but that the lad would be the champion sea trout slayer, for he came home one day with a fish of 14 lb. But the grandfather, doubtless thinking it bad for the boy to be too much inflated with angler's pride, buckled to, and shortly produced a sea trout of over 20 lb., which put the grandson in his proper place.

As a matter of fact, some attempt was made, and, I fear, by means of prawns and other like diabolicisms, to place the lady's salmon in the second standard; in this we failed, and all we could do in the matter was to smile superciliously and declare that after all it was a very ugly fish.

I could write a good deal concerning this beautiful glacier river, but herein variety is ordered. Possibly if an admiring and discriminating public duly appreciate this volume, a similar book, altogether devoted to beautiful Norway, may follow. I have pleasant memories, indeed, of lakes lying high among the mountains where the trout were large, unsophisticated and pink; of homely farm folks who, with undisguised amazement, watched the strange foreigner eat with forks; of gallops in stolkjaerres down precipices, regarded locally as roads; of pale green, glacier-fed lakes with birch trees, rocks, and snowcapped mountains reflected in their placid depths; of torrentuous salmon and trout streams foaming and roaring among huge masses of gneiss, through smiling valleys; of kindly, hospitable folk, of scenery pastoral, sublime, bleak, cultivated, of every kind, and all beautiful; in fact, of a country which for those who love nature, manly pursuits, and friendly, honest people, stands alone.





## CHAPTER VII

# A SUMMER'S DAY ON THE OUSE

URING a portion of the long vacation, it is the custom among the more studious sons of Alma Mater to repair, either alone or in companies—yclept 'reading

parties'—to sequestered villages by river or sea, where with books, fishing tackle, and pleasant society the time is spent less or more profitably, and more or less pleasantly. St. Ives, a quaint old town, where 'old Noll' was once churchwarden, seemed to me, for several reasons, a most suitable spot for retirement during one 'Long.' To begin with, the fishing in the Bedfordshire Ouse is, or was, first-rate, and the most unintelligent will understand that angling is an amusement particularly suited to a reading man, who, while engaged in the 'contemplative man's recreation,' has many opportunities for thinking out intricate problems, and pondering over his studies generally. Then, again, St. Ives is close to Cambridge, and it

was no small advantage to be able to run in twice a week to spend an hour or so with one's coach. I will try and recall the events of one typical day that I spent while staying at that pleasant inn, 'The White Horse,' on the very banks of the river.

I began the morning well, littering a table with various works relating to the Law Tripos, and placing in front of me a pile of notes to be read through before lunch time. Hardly was the first page turned when there entered an old friend, a country doctor, who had driven many miles to look me up. He at once declared I was working too hard, looked fagged, and so on.

'Look here, old fellow, I've never caught a fish in my life; show me how to do it. I need not start back until after lunch.'

Quickly making up my mind that gudgeon were the only catchable fish that August morning, I lent my friend my roach rod, and rigged up a line for myself on a fly rod. We had only to walk ten paces to get into the boat, and to row a couple of strokes to be over a shoal of gudgeon. The little fish bit well, and the doctor caught some dozens; but this sort of fishing did not satisfy him, so, after getting a jar of stewed wheat from the inn, we moored the boat to one of the buttresses of the bridge, over a hole where I knew many roach to be. They were feeding well, notwithstanding the brightness of the day. Probably this was owing to a sudden rise in

the water, sluices having been drawn higher up the river. We had only about an hour and a half for fishing, and in that time accounted for some dozens of fair-sized roach, the capture of which delighted the doctor exceedingly.

The morning did not pass without an incident of interest. I was fishing with the finest possible roach tackle, and that means something very fine (but not large) indeed, attached to a fly rod-not the best weapon for the purpose, but the only one available, the doctor having my roach rod. Just before leaving the pitch my float went quietly under. I struck, and found myself fast in a large fish. He began by sailing off some twenty yards or so from the boat, and then providentially turned back into the hole. The doctor was greatly interested in this fish, and ventured many remarks as to its possible weight. It must have been nearly ten minutes before the large coppercoloured body moving through the water told me I had hooked a bream. Then I found the landing-net had been left at home, and there was not a basket or anything of suitable shape in the boat which would answer the purpose. Even our hats were too small. Then I remembered that in my bag was a gaff without a handle. A gaff without a handle is something like a cart without a horse; but a way out of the difficulty occurred to me. Possibly the gaff might fit the screw-hole at the end of the butt of my rod. It did. The next thing to do was to play the fish dead. Then the butt of the rod was unshipped, the gaff screwed in, and used with professional skill by the man of medicine. A small crowd of persons had gathered on the bridge, and they hailed the lifting in of the three-and-a-half pounder with a general 'hooray.'

'What a lot of talk about catching a moderatesized bream!' the accomplished bream-fisher may exclaim. Yes, my friend, with your stout line and long pole it is no difficult task, but with light roach tackle and fly rod it is quite another affair. This capture ended the morning's fishing, and we returned to the inn, baited ourselves, and the doctor drove away laden with roach, gudgeon, and the bream.

The events of the morning had rather unsettled me for the more serious work of life, so, after the doctor had departed, I summoned my boatman, and, taking only fly rod, jack rod, and some spinning tackle, sculled down the river below the lock. It did not take long to catch a small chub on the shallows below the weir, and with this, rigged on a Chapman spinner, carefully worked along the edge of reed beds, I was fortunate enough to entice out of his lair and bring to creel a jack of about six pounds. Another bait then became a necessity, and so we drifted along, while I whipped for dace or chub. Presently my man called my attention to a big shoal of fish which were feeding on a small flooded piece of the meadow. Owing to the rise of water which I have

previously mentioned, the river was just high enough to get over the bank at this particular spot, and flood to the depth of four to six inches about seventy square yards of grass land. Some hundreds of roach and a few chub had taken advantage of the circumstance to swim on to the meadow and banquet on the drowned flies and insects.

Without leaving the river, and without, indeed, expecting that fish which were grubbing on the bottom would take a fly, I cast over the bank in among a shoal, and drew my flies slowly along the surface. The effect was extraordinary. The whole shoal made a rush for the flies, but I struck before any of the fish reached them. At the second cast I was wiser, and did not strike until I saw the line tighter, when two half-pound roach came tumbling into the landing-net—a good beginning to one of the fastest bits of fly-fishing I have ever enjoyed. Almost every cast resulted in one or two fish, generally roach, but now and again a chub of about one pound would give a little variety to the sport. For the benefit of those who have not taken coarse fish with the artificial fly, I may mention that chub and roach do not rise like a trout, unless it be one of those fat, lazy fellows in Hampshire streams, which come up slowly to inspect the fly, and then, with due deliberation, put their nose out of water and absorb it. The usual way with roach, and rudd also, is to swim after the fly for some little distance before seizing it, and the

swirl they make hurrying through the water often induces the angler experienced in trout, but not in roach-fishing, to strike too soon.

After a while the shoals of fish nearest the river became shy, and to reach the others I took off my boots and stockings and waded in. I left off at last for very shame of catching so many fish, and found, exclusive of some small ones returned to the river, that I had about three and a half dozen fine roach and five moderate-sized chub. I arrived at the inn well pleased with my day's fishing, during which, by the way, opportunities for contemplation and reflection on my studies had been few. The fish caught with the fly weighed 24 lb., and were duly distributed among some of the poorer visitors to the inn that evening.

So ended this pleasant summer day on the Ouse. It must not be supposed that shoals of roach, all agog to take the fly, await the angler on flooded meadows by that river always. As a matter of fact, I never, in so short a time, caught so many fish there with the artificial fly, either before or since; but, unless the place has greatly altered, the roach will usually be found to afford good sport to the fly-fisher, on certain gravelly shallows a few miles lower down the river, during the summer months.





## CHAPTER VIII

## A FROSTY DAY ON THE OUSE

ERE is another recollection of undergraduate days.

The last day but one of the October term has arrived, and with it a cessation

for some weeks of chapels, lectures, and examinations. The work of the year is over. I have breakfasted late, and am enjoying, in an armchair drawn up before a blazing fire, my paper, and the delicious and novel sensation of having absolutely nothing to do. If Mr. Fildes ever wishes to paint a companion picture to his 'Fair Quiet and Sweet Rest,' he could have no better subject than this: 'Repose of a Harassed Undergraduate after an Examination'—sweet rest indeed! The musical chimes of Great St. Mary's are sounding eleven o'clock, when a rap comes at my door, and Walmsley bursts into the room.

'Why, I have been here three years,' he shouts, and only on the day before I go down for good my

idiot of a gyp tells me that there is capital jackfishing within twelve miles. I believe that fellow only kept it to himself till now just to worry me.'

I try to look as grave as the situation demands, and assure Walmsley that he has my utmost sympathy.

'I am half-inclined to go over there to-day,' says he. 'Will you come?'

The thermometer outside my window indicates 10° of frost, the best part of the day has gone by, and it is rather foggy. But I am in a yielding mood, and, as it is Walmsley's last chance, agree to the proposition. While he goes to Curwain's to fetch a pony-trap, I, having looked out some jack tackle, make a hasty visit to the kitchens, and have a little hamper filled with very good bait—for us. I also stow away in it two bottles of Heidsieck, not exactly the tipple for a cold day, but all I can find in my gyp-room, the necessities of the term having almost emptied my little cellar. Walmsley comes running up the staircase as I am fastening the lid of the hamper, crying that he has the fastest little pony in Cambridge, and that we shall be there in no time.

My inquiry as to what we were to fish with is met by the statement that there is an old fellow who sometimes has baits, and that if he has none we must try what phantoms and spoons will do. This is certainly not cheering; but, though not quite agreeing with the man who stated, as a general rule, that 'you can't have what you haven't got,' I yield to the inevitable, with the consolation that I learn something about the water under its winter conditions, even if we catch nothing. Having piled on as many clothes, upper and under, as we can conveniently carry, we start. All our preparations have been made in less than an hour, and by twelve o'clock we are bowling along the Huntingdon road, behind a clever little pony, which, though the roads are coated with hard-trodden snow as smooth as glass, does not make one false step the whole way. But our destination is not Huntingdon. Before reaching Fenstanton we turn off to the right, through the old village of Swavesey (pronounced locally Swasey), cross the line, and trot down the little by-road which leads to Holywell Ferry.

For some time we shout in vain for the ferryman, and I begin to fear the ferry is not in working order owing to the ice, when a tall, burly, red-cheeked man, wearing a fur cap—the common head-gear of the fenmen—makes his appearance from one of the two cottages, which, with a little inn, form the whole village of Holywell Ferry. It seems light work to the powerful fellow to drag across the heavy boat—something like a Thames ballast boat decked—and in a few minutes we are on the other side of the river, chatting with our Charon, our good little pony first having been settled in a warm stall, and the manger well filled.

'Yes, I have some baits,' said the ferryman—'large

roach; and, for the matter of that, spinning ain't no good, as the jack be mostly in one big hole, which we should spin over in ten minutes. No, live-baiting be the thing.'

Unfortunately, both Walmsley and I, in the hurry of coming away, have omitted to bring live-bait tackle with us; but we soon rig some up by despoiling a couple of phantoms of their hooks. Metcalfe—to give Charon his correct name—provides us with some beer-bottle corks to use as floats, and some leads off an old cast net. These complete our rough but not altogether inefficient tackle.

I have never fished on a colder day than this. The frost has only endured two days, but already the banks of the river are skirted with ice about ten to fifteen feet in width, and of considerable thickness. A slight mist overhangs everything, and the air is very still. Rime is falling, which quickly settles on our hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes, and gives us the appearance of having suddenly aged. Metcalfe, who has a very long beard, turns into a regulation Old Father Christmas—at least in appearance. water looks still, cold, and black, but in reality is clear as crystal, and in excellent order for fine and far live-bait fishing. On the floor of the punt is spread half a truss of straw, which, though a trifle irritating when our numbed fingers let fall anything into it, is a very necessary precaution in such weather against frost-bites.

Ourselves, lunch, and tackle comfortably stowed in the punt, Metcalfe, standing in the stern after the manner of the Ouse fisherman, quietly poles us down stream about a quarter of a mile. Here the river makes a gentle curve, and in one place the water is fairly deep. Our punt is moored to the ice, and as soon as possible, for it wants but two hours to sundown, two great roach, somewhat strangely decorated with the triangles off our phantoms, are sent down stream, and checked just on the brink of the hole. For some time we patiently watch our corks, which go under every second, being hardly large enough for our baits; but it is a good fault, and doubtless the roach are none the less attractive to the jack.

Walmsley gets a run, strikes, and misses. At that moment I discover that something is actually tugging at my rod, so strike, and in a few minutes a finely conditioned little fish is in the boat, Metcalfe inveigling him into a narrow-mouthed net in a most artistic manner.

I have been so intent on watching Walmsley's float that I fail to notice the movements of my own, and, as often happens in such cases, the jack takes advantage of me. But it is not often in live-baiting with snap tackle that a fish goes to the length of tightening the line and shaking his head, just to wake one up to the fact that he has the bait in his mouth. We weigh this very obliging fish—5 lb. Then Walmsley has another run,

hits 'un,' as Metcalfe directs, at the right moment, and, after some fine play, during which the fish gets twice under the ice, to the great danger of the line, a seven-pounder is landed. My friend is fishing by the side of the ice, and the fish seem to lie there, for he has another run, making three to my one. However, he does not hook the fish. Then comes a lull, and on consulting with Metcalfe as to whether we had better move or not, he advises another ten minutes in the same spot. So we lay down our rods and open the hamper. People often wonder how anglers can sit out in cold weather. The reason simply is that excitement acts as a good overcoat. Though we are almost perished before the jack begin to run, yet by lunch-time we are warm as toast, the blood coursing briskly through our veins. To give an idea of the cold, after drinking some champagne I rinse the glass in the river, and pass it to Walmsley; before he has time to pour in any wine it is coated inside and out with ice. If this sort of thing could be managed in summer, how pleasant it would be! But I fear we hardly appreciate it on this occasion.

Time is too valuable (from an angling point of view) to linger over our luncheon, and, the jack remaining resolutely unsociable, we move into the centre of the river, where Metcalfe moors the punt with a large stone.

'Your corks are bobbing in a queer way, that they

be,' remarks Metcalfe after a while. 'I shouldn't wonder if a fish worn't round about 'e.'

As he says the last words I see a little commotion on the top of the water, and can just make out that my bait, probably in its desperation to get away from a jack, has managed to swim to the surface, notwith-standing the heavy lead with which the line is weighted.

'Good heavens! What a monster!'

Walmsley utters the exclamation; I am too astonished to speak. A long dark shadow has come to the top of the water; both shadow and roach disappear as if by magic, and my corks go slowly down.

I strike as hard as I dare, and find the fish is on. Such a fish! It feels like playing a steam-pinnace going at half speed. Slowly he sails across the river to the opposite bank, where he sulks for a few minutes under the ice, my line, touching the sharp edge, in the greatest danger of being cut. Then he swims to the other bank, perhaps remembering certain water-lilies round whose stems he has before now twisted the lines of other anglers. Fortunately for me, they have been cut down long ago by the winter frosts; but, go where he will, I am powerless to stop him. After a while I feel him give way a little, and bring him nearly to the punt, where he sulks for some seconds, ever and anon giving his wicked old head a shake to rid himself of the hooks

—at least so I interpret certain vicious tugs on my line. Next he starts up stream.

'Stop 'e, if you can, sir; 'e's an old 'un, 'e be, and if wance he gets by the punt 'e'd hev yer line round the mooring rope in a brace of shakes.'

Thus does Metcalfe advise, so I hold on as tightly as I dare. I am standing in the stern. Suddenly the fish redoubles his exertions, and actually drags the punt right round, until the stern is pointing up stream. As soon as that is effected he doubles back, and goes for the mooring rope. Then I have to hold him still harder, something seems to give in my rod, the fish is off, and I experience the horrid sickening sensation which many anglers feel when the weight goes out of their rod, and they know that a monster is gone. We all look blankly at one another. An examination of the rod and tackle next takes place, and the sad truth reveals itself. The third joint of the rod has come a little way out of the socket, and, consequently, a good deal of extra strain came upon the ferrule of the second joint, which gave way at the critical moment. None of the hooks could have been over the barb in the jack's mouth-probably because there were too many; thus, on the line being loosened, they fell out, and the fish regained his liberty. A fine pike of some 27 lb. weight now adorns the little parlour in Metcalfe's cottage. It was killed about six months later by an eel-spear, or in some such underhand way, on the shallows above the hole

where we fished. Possibly it was the great fish I had the misfortune to lose.

We have no time to give way to grief, so, after fishing for about five minutes in the same spot on the chance of there being another monster in the vicinity, Metcalfe raises our weight, we drift into the centre of the hole, and fish the lower end. Then follows a very sharp piece of work, for between us we have four runs in about fifteen minutes, and two more jack, of 5 lb. and 3 lb. respectively, join their companions in the well. This is not bad in the time, and I believe we should do still better were we not obliged every few minutes to take the ice out of our rod rings, which are, fortunately, very large. For ever after this day will I carry a tiny bottle of oil with me when jack-fishing in frosty weather. A little oil smeared on the rings does not altogether get over the trouble, but it certainly for an hour or so prevents the ice from blocking them up, and each time the ring is cleared more oil can be rubbed on.

About four o'clock, the jack having apparently left off feeding, Metcalfe poles the punt to the bank, and all three of us indulge in a sharp run, after which we have a look in the well at the 'greenbacks'—to give jack a new name. Spying a little dace which Metcalfe has forgotten when he said he had no spinning baits, I cannot resist the temptation of having a cast or two, perhaps with just the faintest idea possible that the monster jack might look at me

again. It does not take long to unship the corks &c., and put up a fine twisted gut trace and a Chapman spinner—very favourite tackle of mine; but I have forgotten the frost, which renders casting next to impossible. I have to clear my rings of ice at least every four throws, and the line is so stiff that I cannot cover more than six or seven yards of water. Five minutes of this sort of thing is enough; but at the very last cast I have a run. It must be freezing harder now, for as I play the fish up to the punt my top ring becomes so full of ice that I can only just manage to pull the line through it. This jack is hooked in the top jaw by the lowest triangle of the flight, all the others hanging loosely. Metcalfe makes a great sweep at the fish, but the loose triangles catch the side of the net, and jack, line, and net get dreadfully mixed up. The fish, which is about 6 lb. in weight, wriggles and twists and twirls after the manner of jack in similar situations. I make up my mind to lose him, but Walmsley gallantly comes to the rescue, and, with laudable presence of mind, seizes the jack with both hands, and somehow gets him, net, line and all, into the punt. That is the last fish.

Leaving Metcalfe to pole the punt up the river, we land, and run on to the little inn, where we are soon thawing ourselves under the genial influence of a roaring fire and something very hot and moderately strong. We have good reasons to con-

gratulate ourselves on the results of our afternoon's fishing; for, taking into consideration the state of the weather, the short time at our disposal, the uncertainty as to baits, and our rough tackle, I should say that rarely has better sport been had under more adverse circumstances. Our bag consists of six fish, weighing 30 lb., all caught between two and a quarterpast four. We have lost as many as we captured, having had twelve runs between us. How cold it is turning out of that cosy little inn for the drive home! But the momentary chill, like the plunge into a cold bath, soon wears off. We arrive at Cambridge in time for 'hall,' at which, you may be sure, we do justice to the plain but wholesome viands there provided.





# CHAPTER IX

#### COCKS AND HENS

HEN I say that on September 27, 1890, one of our most noted fish authorities declared a certain lusty Wiltshire trout to be a cock, the said trout being a hen,

as two thousand or more eggs as big as peas did most clearly prove, it will be understood that whether a trout is male or female is not always an easy question to answer. How it became a momentous one to me I will presently relate. But let me confess at once that I have something more than a story to tell, for, being fully convinced that during the last month of the season the cock-or-hen question is one of no small importance to owners of brown-trout fisheries, I hope, without being dogmatic, to lead a few at any rate of those who read these lines to act in the same sensible manner as does a friend of mine, who was one of the first, if not the very first, to study the matter. Being given to autopsy, he discovered that

during September quite 75 per cent. of the trout caught in his water were females, or, to use fish-cultural slang, 'hen fish.' In August, also, more hens were hooked than cocks, but the difference in numbers was not so marked.

How is this to be explained? Does Nature send female trout in excess of males? That is not likely, and my friend has it on the authority of the late Mr. Andrews, that in the hatchery at Guildford a given number of eggs produces about equal numbers of both sexes. It is clearly obvious, too, that if the females are the best risers, they are not likely to remain long. in the majority; and it is a significant fact that, when the river was netted one winter to get a few thousand ova for artificial fish-culture, many more males were taken in the nets than females. The true explanation probably is, that during August and September the eggs are developing rapidly, and, like most pregnant animals, female trout, for obvious reasons, require at that interesting time a greater supply of food than they do earlier in the season. Fish-culturists, whose dead-horse bills spring up alarmingly in September, can no doubt confirm this theory. Following another rule of Nature, the male's appetite for food diminishes upon the approach of the breeding season. But, whatever the reason, we have the fact, which cannot be disputed, that in September about three out of four fish caught by the angler are, on an average, females; and it is perfectly obvious that to kill the

females at this rate must disturb the balance of sexes, and do great harm to the fishery—unless, of course, the water is too full of fish.

It is a well-known fact that an excess of males is bad. The males fight over the females, courtships are stormy, and unions are curtailed and unfruitful. Need I say more to prove that, in making the self-denying ordinance—in September all females caught must be returned to the river—my friend has done a wise thing? Another good rule on his well-managed fishery was, that from June onwards fish which are found out of condition are knocked on the head, it being presumed that they are aged or diseased, and therefore better out of the river than in it. I mention this as many men think it unsportsmanlike to kill fish which appear out of condition, whatever the time of year.

Two days before the incoming of chill October I drove along a famous old coach road, to pay my friend a visit, and devote a few hours to whipping his well-stocked water. The inevitable delays at starting, coupled with a short cut which ought to have saved me a mile, but did not, made it well-nigh noon before I arrived. Then I found that my host, knowing I always used the main road, had gone that way to meet me. Having blessed the short cut, I walked on to the bridge, below which the river widened out into almost a lake, now roughened considerably by a boisterous west wind. Here were trout in thousands,

and the wind was greatly in my favour, as the water was unusually low and bright. These trout love a large fly, and the bright sun, combined with the rough wind, justified a good-sized silver sedge. Very few fish were rising, and feeding fish did not seem stationary, but were clearly roaming about after food.

Hoping my friend C. would see me from the road, I wandered down the river, now and again taking a cast, and soon turned over a fish. Next a splashy rise tempted me to an impossible cast, but a favouring gust bore my fly into the trout's mouth. Then C. came across the meadows, landed the fish, and told me stories of his recent sport among grouse in Scotland, and partridges nearer home. As he talked I cast. Away from the bank the fish rose shyly and short; but close under the sedges I hooked a sturdy trout, which during some minutes objected in the most forcible, obstinate, and unreasonable way to enter the landing-net. Fortunately he was well hooked, and, to cut the story short, weighed 2 oz. over the pound. Being an undoubted male, he went into the basket, C. remarking that I was lucky to get a cock, as, out of ten brace of fish caught that week by his brother, all had been females except one. A little later we had to return to the house for lunch (I can strongly recommend both curried and potted trout), and on the way fed, with floating pieces of bread, some very tame trout which were lying near the keeper's cottage. After

lunch, and an hour passed pleasantly in discussing fishing and photography, we put ourselves into an inside car, and drove about two and a half miles to the top of the water. The river flows through a beautiful vale, the low-lying portions of which are mostly water-meadows. The larger of the streams which water the lowlands all contain trout, and, unless the water is very low, some capital baskets of fish may be caught out of them, particularly in the little pools below hatchways.

At one of these pools we came upon D., my host's brother, who had been experimenting with a Mayfly, had caught one good-sized fish, and been broken by another of about 2 lb., which carried off his last Mayfly. This speaks well for artificial green drakes in September. Putting up a very large sedge of a peculiar pattern, tied by Holland, and known as the craker, he started to fish down stream, and it was interesting to see the large trout swim after the great fly, though they were very chary of taking it. commenced fishing by making a cast or two in a big pool right at the top of the water. About the third cast the fly, an alder of medium size (the day was now dull and overcast), fell lightly on some black, calm water close under the camp-shedding on the opposite side of the river. Almost instantly there was a slight break in the water, followed by a turn of the wrist and 'crirr' of the reel. The trout fought right gamely, and it was some minutes before he was landed, when, joy, another male! About this time a small rise of pale olive duns came on the water, and the trout commenced to rise prettily. I took the trouble to change my fly; but the fish were in a peculiar humour, for while C. had several rises to a good-sized craker, my beautiful little artificial dun, fished dry, was ignored.

The pool producing nothing further, C. and I crossed the river and strolled through a deer-park, the stately elms in which were commencing to put on their russet mourning for the dead summer. The poplars, dotted about the valley of the river, were already a bright golden colour, and those most tender and beautiful of riverside trees, the willows, were beginning to sparkle with bright yellow leaves. Most gorgeous were some horse chestnuts in tones of red, which pen cannot well describe. Under some spreading trees was a group of hinds. At the stream's edge, their soft noses just touching the limpid waters, were two graceful stags bearing lofty antlers. For the moment we forgot the trout in our admiration of the scene. As C. was climbing the ten-foot wire fence surrounding the deer-park, he noticed a fish of about I lb. lying on a patch of white gravel, just above a small brick archway which crossed one of the watermeadow carriers.

'Try for him,' he said; and I tried. Getting well below the fish, I found that three courses were open to me. I might cast my fly on a bush to the left of the fish, on the bank to the right of the fish, or over the fish itself. Apparently I chose the first course, for I left the dun on the bush. This misfortune was in reality a blessing, for it led to the alder being again put up, and an alder proved itself to be the best fly that afternoon.

Then we passed on to the river again, where it was shallow and rather weedy. The wind had fallen considerably, and we did little or no good until we reached some deep water, where, close to the sedges, the fish rose fairly well. I fished my own bank with the alder, and C., coming after me, and therefore at a considerable disadvantage, cast to the opposite side of the river, and had double as many rises as I did, but his fish nearly all rose short, owing, I expect, to the fly being just a fraction too large for the state of the water. Very few fish were to be seen taking the natural fly, but, after a few minutes of careful casting, I hooked a good trout close to the sedges under my own bank, and so long was I in playing it, that C. kindly came to my assistance. A fine shapely fish, with silvery sides, small head, and well-rounded belly, weighing a few ounces under 2 lb. A female, surely.

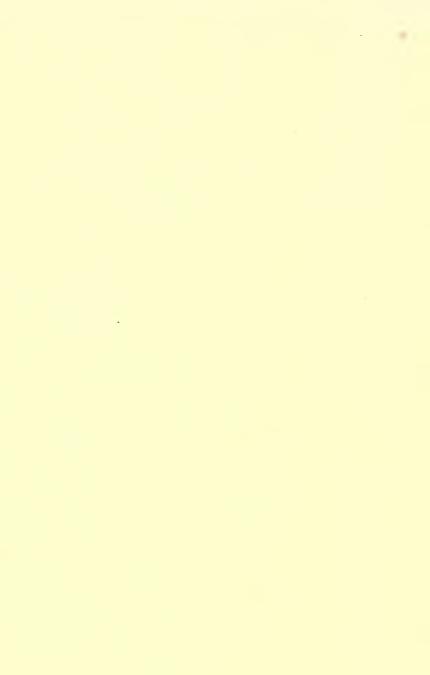
'But the lower jaw is slightly hooked,' I remarked; and yet, what can that stomach contain but eggs?'

We were both greatly perplexed, but finally C., whose face was the picture of anxiety, killed the fish, cut it open, and disclosed no eggs, but two great

bands of milt. Another male—which was decidedly curious.

I have made it obvious that it is not always an easy thing to distinguish cocks from hens when trout are concerned; but, as a rule, there is little difficulty in the matter, and, if an occasional cock is returned to the river by mistake for a female, what harm is done? There is nothing like experience to enable anglers to decide the sex of trout. Towards the end of the season the differences are, generally speaking, more marked than earlier in the year. The hens look in the height of condition. Their forms are well rounded, their colours are bright, and if the ova are far developed, the position of the eggs can be felt. As often as not the lower jaw is slightly less prominent than the upper jaw, and the gill-cover is rather rounder than in the cock fish. Cock fish, on the other hand, are inclined to be lanky and thin, with duller colouring than the females. Their sides and bellies are apt in September to vary from a yellow reddish-brown to a pale, bilious-looking green, and their appearance often gives the idea that they are out of condition. Then the gill-cover is not so round as in the hen fish, the head is longer, larger, and more awkward-looking, the lower jaw frequently projects, and sometimes, particularly in aged fish, has a tendency to turn up. A trout with a hook at the end of the lower jaw is almost certainly a male. Sometimes the only way to decide is to cut the trout open, after

"THE KENNET SWIFT."



which operation the fish will probably be retained whatever its sex.

Soon after the perplexing fish had been creeled a raincloud came up from the north-westward, and just before and during the fall of the few drops of rain which it condescended to sprinkle over us a small hatch of duns took place, and the trout rose well for a few minutes, during which, without changing my fly, I managed to land another brace of fish about I lb. each, both males. Then the spell seemed broken, for the next, and, indeed, the three succeeding fish were all females. C. also caught some good-sized female fish, which, with mine, were returned to the water.

'But you said that on an average 75 per cent. of the fish caught in September were females,' may be remarked. Truly I did, and my friend's fish diary will prove it, if ever proof is needed. That out of four brace of fish two and a half brace should be males was, at that season, most singular. For some reason or other the males on that one day were feeding better than the females, for, coming to inspect the fish house, we found D. had secured a brace.

Leaving the river for a while, we wandered across the water-meadows, putting up wild ducks by the way, and soon found ourselves by the side of an ancient decoy, long since disused, and now only tenanted by trout, which, though we exercised many allurements, we failed to captivate. Thence we passed on into the grounds of an old manor-house, with quaint, old-fashioned, walled-in garden, across the bottom of which ran a fish stew. Such a stew! Here in the good old times monster trout had been reared on a diet of worms, and duly presented to notable personages when of a notable size. From the stew we passed a violet bed, which we mildly robbed of three or four sweetly scented flowers, and then started again for the river. Along a rough farm-road a corn crake ran in front of us, and only flew when a landing-net was all but over its head. This, I take it, was a bad omen, for we rose no more fish, and so, darkness coming on, strolled home.

During a long, dark, solitary drive that night I pondered much over the cock-and-hen question. Was there in this respect an analogy between trout and salmon? Were many more hen salmon caught in the autumn than males? Probably there were. In that case, ought not the females to be more strictly preserved? If there were more female salmon in rivers than there are at present, would not the fights between rival males be fewer, and wounds, with the Saprolegnia ferax as a consequence, be avoided? It has been, therefore, with peculiar interest that I have read, in the 'Field,' statements showing that the majority of salmon caught are females.





## CHAPTER X

#### AFTER-DINNER SEA TROUT

We have all lounged about, grumbling as only anglers can when there has been a run of sea trout which, owing to meteoro-

logical conditions, are utterly uncatchable. At dinner our appetites are ruined by the state of our feelings, for through the windows we look down on to the placid lochan, where constant breaks in the water, widening out into a series of rings, tell us that the fish are rising madly at the flies which abound in this sheltered glen. It is a sweet spot—a sort of oasis in a rocky mountain desert. The great hills of gneiss, sparsely covered with heather, grass, and bracken, rise up abruptly on both sides of the valley to a height of not much less than 2,000 feet. If we look to the eastward, the glen seems shut in by towering mountains, from the loftiest of which clouds are rarely absent. But the valley pursues a winding course,

and the little salmon-river, before pouring into the lochan, has flowed some four or five miles, and skirts the base of the mountain spur, which apparently blocks the upper end of the glen. Half-wild mountain sheep are skipping from crag to crag on the hillside opposite; a mallard and its brood of flappers, unmindful of dread August I, are quietly paddling about the loch in company with a few moorhens. A herring gull comes flying up the glen from the sea, some two miles distant, swoops down on a brownie or two, but, finding these more difficult to catch than the inhabitants of the sea loch, majestically flies off again, and is seen no more.

Meanwhile these sea trout rise, and rise, and rise again. 'I really think we might get a fish or two to-night,' says S., and the suggestion meets with much favour; so, making our excuses to the ladies, we take our rods, which have been standing idle against the hall-door all day, and stroll down to the little quay. Soon we are in the boat, and lying stationary this windless evening not far from the lovely bed of water-lilies which encompasses one end of the loch. The sun has gone down behind one of those great mountains of gneiss. The dusk is creepingslowly upon us. We begin by fishing fine, casting into the ripples caused by the rising fish. Almost immediately S.'s reel cries out as a fish of 2 lb. seizes the fly and makes that gallant dash for liberty peculiar to sea trout. A moment later my turn comes with a fish of 1½ lb., and

for about a quarter of an hour we get a fish every few minutes. By this time it is as dark as it ever gets in these Northern latitudes on summer nights, and we decide to put up larger flies and stouter casts. We cannot now see the rises very well, but this appears to matter little, as the loch is simply alive with fish, which take the fly in the most exemplary fashion.

'I wonder what would happen if we had two on at once,' says S.

The sea trout immediately reply to his question, one taking his fly and another mine, the answer being that one fish is landed and the other lost. The sport is glorious, and I doubt if there is anything much more exciting than to have a large fresh-run sea trout on one's line in the night-time.

It is no easy matter to keep the lines, and sometimes even the rods, from clashing. We are not unmindful of the fearful results of a tangle, but careful as we both are the inevitable happens. I cast, rise a fish, miss him, and cast again hurriedly out of my turn, hit S.'s rod, and we immediately find ourselves considerably mixed up as to casts and lines. It is a most aggravating position to be in. Those big fish around are sucking in the night moths, while we vainly try to disentangle our amorous casts; but in this we succeed after some ten or twenty minutes, and go fishing again.

One of the most interesting parts of the performance lies in inveigling these sea trout into the landing-

net. We cannot see the line, and the fish are invisible unless they splash on the surface. Sometimes we are feebly poking about with the landing-net while the trout is probably a yard or two under the water. We lose not a few in this way; and so the sport continues. At last, fearful that Mrs. S. should think some accident has befallen us, we actually leave off fishing while the trout are still rising, an almost sinful thing to do, but justifiable under the circumstances, and, having moored the old boat, walk proudly up to the house with the big landing-net simply brimming over with fish.

Very different was our luck one other evening which I remember full well. S. had been away on an expedition more or less connected with those same mountain sheep, which possess the activity of goats and the flavour almost of venison. During the day had come a terrific downfall of rain, causing the whole country to run water, and one of the biggest spates ever experienced to tear down the little salmon-river. S. arrived just before dinner, when the water was still rising, and by the time dessert was on the table the lochan was several feet above its usual level, flooding even the carriage drive, and rendering the road to the house impassable. S. felt sure that a number of salmon and sea trout had run up, and suggested we should see what a fly would do. We therefore went down to the lochan, only to find it totally submerged, and the boat in consequence twenty yards from the edge of the water. S. then demonstrated the utility of the kilt by taking off his shoes and stockings, wading in, and recovering the boat, which was half full of water. By the time she was baled out it was nearly dark, and both of us, feeling the matter was rather hopeless, rowed out on to the lochan, or rather over meadows, to where we thought the basin of the loch might be. Careful casting only produced a little finnock, and we could not come across any shoals of sea trout.

The lochan failing us, we tried the river, rowing a short distance up the glen, and casting carefully. It was a beautiful August evening, such as we rarely see in the South of England, and the moon, then rising over the rustic bridge which spans the outlet to the loch, soon lit up the great sheet of water, now stretching from mountain base to mountain base. It was at its full, which told us that the tides in the sea loch were at their highest, and this led us to hope that there might be a grand run of salmon during the night.

But it was not till the morrow that the fish, or the great bulk of them, reached us. In the morning, though the weather had cleared and the sun was shining brightly, there was a fresh up-stream wind which finely rippled some of the best pools. I went down to the bridge, thinking I might find a salmon there, and saw a remarkable and interesting run of

fish. Under the bridge the water, which had gone down during the night, was very shallow, perhaps not more than six inches in depth; but immediately above it the stream widened out into a little pool, a sure holding-place for salmon. Thence, by a narrow channel, came the water from the loch. I was walking down the side of this channel when I saw a slight boil in the water—there of no considerable depth, and, owing to the large amount of rain which had fallen, considerably diluted by rainwater, and very much clearer than usual.

I could see clearly to the bottom in this channel between loch and bridge, and there, just under my nose, were two salmon swimming slowly up stream, breaking the surface, now with tail, now with head I made a cast or two over them, but with small hope and no result, then continued my way towards the pool. As I walked on I saw more salmon in the channel, and while I stood at the head of the pool between thirty and forty fish came with a splutter and a flurry through the shallow water beneath the bridge into the pool, and were lost to sight in the deeper water. A minute or two later a few salmon which, I presume, were some of those I had seen, commenced to swim backwards and forwards at the mouth of the narrow channel, as if in doubt whether or not to ascend it. Sometimes they would run up a dozen yards and then turn back again, but in the end they invariably made up their minds to continue

their journey. Their speed was about two miles, or less, an hour. There were certain fish which remained altogether in the pool, at least for that day, and of these I could plainly see four or five lying at its head, just as one may see brown trout in a millpool below the rushing water, the stream passing over them as they lie in dead water.

The breeze had unfortunately died away, or I should have had a salmon that morning. As it was, I induced one of them to follow my fly several times, and then to rise at it; but he rose short, missing it entirely, and would not come again. Besides these fish which were lying at the head, there was one big fellow which had taken up a place in the centre of the pool. Him I could not see, but every now and again he would leap clean out of the water with that sidelong sort of motion peculiar to salmon.

It is not impossible to distinguish between the rises of salmon and sea trout. The sea trout, as a rule, come at the fly with a dash, the salmon more often rising with a sort of lunge. Possibly this is because the sea trout may rise suddenly and more or less vertically from some distance below the surface, while the salmon frequently follows the fly for a yard or two, and then makes a more or less horizontal lunge at it. But I do not pretend to dogmatise on this subject. There are all sorts and conditions of rises.

The interesting run of salmon I have described

happened at midday. In the afternoon I met a man, who had been engaged in putting up wire-fencing to keep in the sheep, who told me that he and the men working under him had seen several runs of fish at the same hour.

But I am wandering far away from my original subject, concerning which I have only to add that, as sea trout are uncertain in their migrations, they should be diligently fished for whenever opportunity occurs. Fishing, therefore, during the two or three hours commencing at sundown is well worth trying at the close of the calm, bright, unfishable days of August, especially from a boat on a loch. Though the trout rise more freely than in daylight, it is really more difficult fishing, so far as playing them is concerned; and the sport, when good, is most exciting.





# CHAPTER XI

#### BORDERING ON THE MARVELLOUS

evening, too late to think about anything except dinner, and yet too early to dine, when little Jones came up to me in the library of the Junior Megatherium, and made rather an odd proposition.

'I want you to dine with me to-night, but I can't dine with you. Fact is, I have asked a dear old chap, who I hope will be my father-in-law some day, to feed here, and at the last moment those confounded people at the Foreign Office send me away to Paris on an important mission. The dinner is ordered; you won't mind taking my place, will you?'

Jones and I were old friends, having had many pleasant fishing excursions together in the wilds of Ireland, and I had great pleasure in doing as he desired.

'By the bye,' said he, before leaving the club, 'I

took the old boy to a bachelors' party the other evening —a lot of nice fellows, oddly enough all fishermen—but something put him out, and he has been decidedly cool since. Wish you could find out what it was, and put matters right. Julia is quite upset about it.'

Julia was Mr. Lovibond's daughter, and Mr. Lovibond was the prospective father-in-law.

'No, I won't undertake that, but I will do my best to keep him in good humour, and send him home in that condition,' said I; and Jones hurried off.

There was no doubt about Mr. Lovibond having something on his mind. All through dinner he sat in more or less of a brown study. He was an old-fashioned-looking man, with collar of great magnitude, a stock wound thrice round his throat, and a frill to his shirt. So I thought he might like some of the rare old port which is to be found nowhere but in the cellars of the Junior Megatherium. In this I was right, for after the third glass his face lightened somewhat, and a strange thing happened.

'I am curious to know if you are fond of fishing,' said he.

I replied that I was.

'Then I should like to tell you some entertaining stories about fish.'

I said, truly, that nothing could interest me more, and he immediately launched forth into the most extraordinary fictions I had ever heard. Some of them

made me almost turn pale, and I was horrified by the lack of veracity in such an elderly and apparently eminently respectable old gentleman. I pitied Jones, and I found myself wondering if an hereditary instinct to tell such awful stories would be transmitted to his offspring by the fair Julia. But I kept calm, and for my friend's sake did my best to hide my feelings, letting no trace of my unbelief and indignation be seen by the venerable old reprobate.

'I remember that on one Christmas day,' said he, 'I was staying at a house in a remote country place, and the coach which was bearing the fish for the Christmas dinner was snowed up. I told my host that I thought I might be able to catch a pike, and while the rest were at church broke the ice in the centre of the lake—a big job, as it had been freezing for three weeks. I borrowed a stuffed bird from the lady'smaid's Sunday hat, attached it to a meat hook, and caught pike out of the hole at the rate of about one every three minutes. As soon as I laid the fish I caught on the ice, they froze hard. When they were taken into the kitchen they thawed and came to life, and two of them seized hold of a maidservant who was looking at them, and seriously injured her legs. One big fellow, which weighed something over 40 lb., sat up on his tail and literally defied us all. Finally, the squire had to get his gun and shoot him. Not only had we fish for dinner, but the whole village was supplied as well.'

Mr. Lovibond drank off another glass of port, and continued:

'There is an extraordinary lake among the mountains in the north of Scotland which is full of very peculiar trout. When they are rising they make a noise not unlike the crowing of cocks, and until the gillies hear the crowing they never let their employers cast a line. But that is nothing to what I recollect of the fish in a certain river in Norway. For some reason or another they are only to be caught when the church bells are ringing, and the peasants say that many years ago a casting of bells was being ferried across the river, when the bottom of the boat gave way, and ever since the fish have had this peculiarity. No more port, thanks. What strange fish salmon are! When I was fishing in Norway a remarkable thing happened. I had hooked a salmon of about 70 lb., and had been playing him for the greater part of the day, when my line suddenly broke near the reel, and the fish went off with about 100 vards of plaited silk. I landed to obtain some muchneeded refreshment, and it seems that my man failed to moor the boat securely to the bank, for it drifted away and went rapidly down the stream. In another moment it would have been among the rocks; but it stopped, and to our amazement began to work slowly up stream. My man, who was superstitious, was much frightened, and thought some evil agency was at work. Well, we followed it until we came to the spot whence

it had started, and here it grounded, and I seized the mooring rope. At that moment there was a terrific splash, and a huge fish threw itself out of the water. While it was in the air a terrific gust of wind came tearing down the valley, and, instead of tumbling back into the water, the fish was caught by the wind and fell into the boat. It was the same fish I had lost but a quarter of an hour before. On making a careful examination of the boat, I found that my line had caught on an old nail which projected from the keel, and that it must have been the fish which towed the boat up stream. Strange, was it not?'

I gravely bowed assent.

'Some curious stories connected with fish and rings have been told,' he continued, after a slight pause, 'but I never heard one more astonishing than an adventure which happened to a friend of mine. He was barbel-fishing in the Thames on a rather cold day, and a valuable signet ring fell off his benumbed finger into the water. Two years later, while he was fly-fishing for dace quite ten miles from the place he had angled for barbel, his fly caught in an old bird's nest which crowned a withy stump on the opposite side of the backwater in which he was fishing. He shook his line to free it, and, to his astonishment, the ring he had lost two years before came down the line towards him. It is supposed that it must have been taken by some water-bird to its nest, and that my friend cast his fly exactly in the centre of the ring.

Thus, when he tugged the line, the ring was displaced from its resting-place, and slid down the line. A marvellous story, is it not?' and he looked inquiringly at me.

'Its very strangeness is a guarantee of its truth,' said I; 'no one would invent such an improbable incident. Heaven forgive me!'

The last three words to myself.

Still he kept on telling of giant pike and salmon, of impossible angling feats, of fishes the like of which no man ever had nor ever will set eyes upon, of seafishermen who had mysterious powers of drawing fish into their nets; in short, he proved a very Munchausen among anglers. All through I humoured him as well as I could, assuming a perfect belief in all he said; but when he left the club, what a relief it was to rush into the pure air of the Square, and give vent to feelings too long suppressed.

Christmas came, soon after which festive time I hied me North, in a futile attempt to catch the early salmon. It was some six weeks or so after my evening with Mr. Lovibond that I received the following letter from Jones:

'Dear J. B.—I write to you first of all to tell you the good news. Julia has accepted me, and the old boy raises no objection. Never was man more grateful to you than I am just at the present moment. My father-in-law-that-is-to-be went to a bachelors' party where all the fellows were more or

less anglers. I told you about it when I last saw you. Thinking to amuse the old boy, they plied him with as fearful examples of angling stories as have up to the present been compounded. At first the worthy man believed everything he was told, but gradually it dawned upon him that he had been more or less hoaxed. This seems to have made him wild, and he declared to Julia, whose liking for me he had observed, that no daughter of his should ever marry an angler. Julia suggested that perhaps after all the stories were true, and pointed out that he had led a retired country life, and strange things might happen in the world without his hearing of them. This made him doubtful again, and it was at this time that he dined with you. Hearing you were an angler, the idea seems to have struck him that if he spun you some of those yarns he might judge from your demeanour whether they were true or not. I don't suppose you believed them, but he thought you did, with the result that he came to the conclusion they were true, and told his daughter she was free to marry me or any other angler. The happy day is actually fixed. Mind, I shall expect you to come and be my best man. Whether you catch salmon or not, bring back some good stories.'

But I thought it wise not to go to that wedding.



# CHAPTER XII

#### SECRETS OF SUCCESS

far as my experience teaches, on four things—Firstly, fish, for it is in vain to cast an angle on waters where they are

not; secondly, some inclination on their part to feed; thirdly, a bait to their taste; and, fourthly, absence of suspicion that they are being angled for.

No one of these four circumstances is less important than any of the others, but I now propose to offer only a few remarks as to the last. The suspicions of different fish are raised in very different ways. In some fish the sight of a man is enough to spoil their appetite for at least a quarter of an hour; while with others, a remarkable instance of which is salmon, the angler in full sight of every fish in the pool may thrash the water for hours with a very flail of a line, and yet finally a fish will rise and seize his fly. What would a Hampshire trout say to such

treatment on the angler's part? But wink at him, and his suspicions are roused; let your shadow fall across him, and his vigorous chase after smuts at once ceases. Different fish certainly do look at things from different points of view. Find a rising salmon. After missing the lure twice or thrice, will he come again to that fly? Not a bit of it. He does not care for you, or your line, or your gillie standing by, gaff in hand; but he is suspicious of that fly, which you must change if you want to catch his salmonship. Salmon are among the few fish for which fine tackle is not of the very first importance, and even for salmon I firmly believe that those anglers who use single gut will meet with more success than those who use twisted gut, unless the water be heavy or much clouded.

As a general rule, to which there are very few exceptions, the way to bring about that fourth circumstance so conducive to a well-filled basket—absence of suspicion on the part of the fish—is to keep out of sight and to use fine tackle. One or the other is always necessary; usually both. There are certain kinds of fish which may be caught on very coarse tackle, provided they do not know an angler is about. I have more than once seen country lads catching trout by means of a few yards of coarse line, and what is known in village tackle-shops as a 'ha'penny hook,' baited with a worm, while the superbly accoutred angler, wading in mid-stream,

casting well-scoured redworms, mounted on the finest Stewart tackle, could do little or no good. The village boy, absolutely out of sight of the trout, crawls along the bank, hiding behind stones and bushes, letting his worm get to the fish in places where few anglers' lures ever reach them, and which they, nothwithstanding the coarse gut and thick line, take, being absolutely without suspicion.

The wader, also, probably cannot be seen by the trout; but as he wades up or down stream fish are disturbed, which dart away, and communicate their fears to their fellows, thus causing the knowledge that an angler is abroad to spread among all the trout in the neighbourhood of the angler. The disturbance of the water, rattle of stones kicked up by the brogues, and such-like unusual signs, must also tend to the same effect. Hence, when the worm comes floating down it is unheeded, for the warning, 'beware of worms,' has gone forth among trout. At least that is my theory, and I am quite open to be convinced of its incorrectness. If the wading angler uses coarse tackle he catches no fish, if he uses fine tackle he catches some, but not so many or such fine specimens as the village boy who lies hidden behind the bushes and offers the worm on the ha'penny hook to the confiding trout.

Chub are fish which may be caught on very coarse tackle if the angler is absolutely out of sight. Though shy he must be somewhat stupid, for I have

frequently taken large fish of that species in three feet of water, when the float was a large pelican quill with a gaudy red nob at the top, and weighted with four or five small pistol-bullets. Float, line, and bullets were all visible to the fish, which nevertheless took the lump of cheese-paste greedily. The secret was that I had floated down quietly to some twenty yards above the fish, moored my punt without standing up, and behaved in such a manner that none except fish in the immediate vicinity of the boat had the remotest idea that an angler was about. On the other hand, I have sometimes fished deep chub-holes with the finest tackle without catching a fish, the reason being, I imagine, that, having to stand near the hole, the chub were aware of my presence, and would not feed.

The jack of to-day is, in most waters, an educated fish, and doubtless resents being fished for with the tackle of fifty years ago. I once had two somewhat curious days' fishing in the Thames, which illustrated the advantages of fine tackle in a marked degree. The place was a big eddy near Hambledon Lock, and the time January. The first great flood of the year had subsided, and the perch, which had been madly on the feed, were becoming a little shy. I was using two rods, on one of which was ordinary livebait snap tackle, the bait a small dace, while on the other was a very fine gut paternoster, with two rather small books baited with minnows.

On the first day I remained until evening moored in the eddy, letting my jack tackle work all over the place, and also paternostering every part of the water carefully for perch. I think the jack tackle rather scared the perch, for I caught few, but had five runs with jack on the perch paternoster, and took every fish, which averaged  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lb. each. The dace must have been seen by many feeding jack during the day, but was not touched.

On the following day I went to the same spot, and almost the same thing occurred—nothing caught on the jack tackle, but four runs from jack on the perch tackle, all of which resulted in fish. On the third day I went again to the eddy. Almost immediately my paternoster went in a hook was bitten off, and I did not have another touch from any kind of fish during the day; the gut once bitten through, the charm seemed broken. To catch nine jack in succession without mishap, on what were actually large roach hooks mounted on fine gut, is in itself a curious fact, but I tell the story to illustrate the importance of using fine tackle in jack-fishing.

Many a time have I proved to my entire satisfaction that one can hardly angle too fine for river perch—a fish which differs from chub in requiring fine tackle (unless, of course, the water is thick), whether they can see you or not. Not long since when fishing in the Kennet, having exhausted almost every device to get the fish to feed, as a last resource

I put on my finest roach tackle, with a small hook mounted on very fine-drawn gut, and baited with a small minnow. A perch at once took the bait, and I returned with a not quite empty basket.

The use of fine gut in fly-fishing for trout, and the necessity of keeping well out of sight, are so generally acknowledged and put into practice by all fly-fishers worthy the name, that I need hardly dilate upon them here. I will only mention that I know (by report only) of a most successful trout-angler in the Midlands who uses extraordinarily thick casts and large flies, and yet brings home larger baskets of fish than his neighbours. His practice is to stand well back from the bank, and with a long line to cast his heavy fly into nooks and corners where anglers with light tackle cannot, as a rule, safely penetrate. In such out-of-the-way places he finds, I suppose, confiding trout who take his fly for some beetle or caterpillar dropping from the bushes above (I am told it goes in with a good splash), and so rise and take it. Anyhow, he catches fish, which are queer things; I do not mean his fish in particular, but fish generally.

In connection with this subject, it is worthy of remark that roach differ in some respects from many other fish. They are shy and suspicious, but a supply of ground bait lulls their suspicions in a wonderful manner. You might sit in a punt all day, and put in tons of ground bait, but a trout would but rarely come within ten yards of you; but up swarm the roach, right under the punt, and round the very punt poles, taking your bait greedily. Like most other fish, roach vary very much in their habits in different streams, and in some places I have found them wondrous shy. 'Lots of big roach here, but no one can catch them,' is a remark I have often heard when being introduced to a new river.

The following incident gives a very fair idea of the amount of intelligence possessed by the roach. I had been spinning for Thames trout near Marsh Lock during the best part of a July morning. The sun having mounted high in the heavens, and the day being brilliantly clear, all chances of taking a trout until evening were out of the question. Standing on the bridge, I could see that a shoal of fish were basking near the top of the water by the side of the weir wall. Thinking they might be dace, I put a fly over them, but had no rise. Then, peering cautiously over the wall, I saw they were roach. I had with me a little ground bait, so I flicked in a small bit, which they at once attacked as it sunk down, but they did not follow to the bottom. Some fine float tackle was soon ready, and, baiting the hook with a couple of lively gentles, I let it down among the roach. Not a fish would look at the bait. I thought that perhaps the float frightened them, so put on a fine cast, and, baiting with a single gentle, dropped it among them, at the same

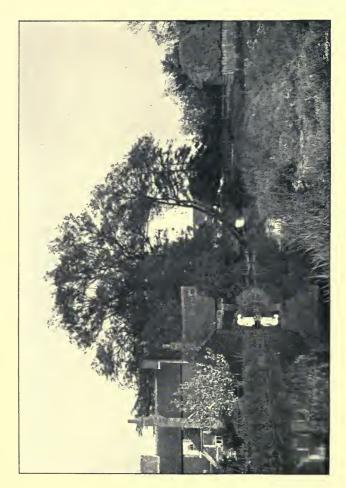
time throwing in two or three gentles loose. The loose gentles the fish ate, but mine sank to the bottom, the weight of the hook taking it down rather quickly. Having tried various other dodges, without success, I put one shot on the line and a very small porcupine float, only about 2 in. long. Even then they would not look at the bait, neither gentle nor paste. Finally I took off the quill float and shot, replacing the former with a tiny piece of stick, such as is often to be seen floating on the surface of the river.

The stick did it. A roach at once took the bait, and I was fortunately able to land him at some distance from the rest. By keeping very quiet and playing the fish with great care, nearly a dozen good-sized roach were killed. Probably the fish could see that someone was about, for I had to look over the wall, and my rod cast a shadow on the water. A chub, under such circumstances, would have refused to feed at all, but the roach only waited until the suspicious-looking float was removed, when they at once took the bait. They drew the line at the quill plucked from the foreign porcupine, but had no objection to the home-grown and familiar piece of dry stick.

And now to horrify those who devoutly believe in returning undersized fish to the water. In more or less public streams, when no sufficient funds for restocking are available, let it be done by all means. In private waters, the constant return of the immature

leads to such an elaborate education in artificial flies and fish hooks, and the fish grow so objectionably coy and shy, that fly-fishing ceases to be a pleasure, and assumes the proportions of a task. The charming little trout-stream known as the Lambourne is, in parts, a case in point. Fish abound in the reach from the Swan Inn upwards, but, except after dusk or when the Mayfly is up and the weather particularly favourable, few can be caught. Even when the Mayfly has been abundant and the river one seething cauldron of trout (I believe this is a new and original simile, quite as good as many that pass muster), I once saw twenty-five anglers work hard all day and catch nothing. The secret of having a good fishery is to kill everything landed except fingerlings, and for every fish killed place two yearlings in the river. The expense is not considerable.





"FISH ABOUND IN THE REACH FROM THE SWAN INN UPWARDS."





### CHAPTER XIII

'MIDST MOUNTAINS, MIDGES, AND LOCHS OF SUTHERLANDSHIRE

ONNIE Scotland was the country in which M. and I had determined to spend the first month of the Long Vacation, and, leaving the courts still sitting with

windows closed—for judges learned in the law stigmatise everything in the nature of fresh air as a draught—we hurried away from Temple Pier by the noisy little tender 'Ich Dien,' and before nightfall were ploughing through billows knocked up by a strong nor'-easter in the direction of Aberdeen. Our ultimate destination was the far North-west, and we went with light hearts (excepting, perhaps, during three hours, when it blew half a gale), for from everyone had we heard glowing accounts of the sport to be obtained in Sutherland. Only the day previously, in a fishing-tackle-shop, we had met a man who intended visiting in September the same place to which we were going, and from him obtained

some very useful information. There were a chain of five lakes, it seemed, and the best of these was one bearing the numerical designation, 'Number Three.' It is of Loch Number Three that I have rather a curious tale to tell.

We left the steamer at Aberdeen without regret, pushed on at once to Inverness, where our eyes were delighted by seeing a kilt—on an Englishman, of course. Thence we journeyed by rail to Lairg, and the following day, after a forty-mile drive through wild moorland country, passing on the way famous Loch Stack and many more or less prolific sheets of water, arrived at our destination on the North-west coast.

The great drawback to many fishing-stations in Sutherlandshire is the distance the inns are from the lochs, and we, finding ourselves exceptionally well placed, with plenty of fishing near at hand, for some time forgot all about the advice given by our friend of the tackle-shop. Even when Loch Number Three did come into our mind, the gillie rather threw cold water on the idea of fishing it. It was 'gude for feshe,' said he, but a long way off, and the fishing was as good nearer home. However, we, or rather I, did fish the loch, and this is how it came about.

Nearly a month had passed, during which we had fished rivulet and river, lake and sea, with varying success, and on the very last day available we strode over the moor to try one of the lower of the chain of lochs

before mentioned. At the end of four miles' stiff walking, during which we saw neither bird nor beast of any kind saving one tough old cock grouse, we came to Loch Number Two, on which was a boat. Needless to say, we lost no time in getting to work on this our last day; but the fish seemed not to be in rising humour, and though the day was fine and a pleasant breeze ruffled the surface of the loch, the trouties-I write the diminutive advisedly—ignored the attractions of 'Zulus' and other monstrosities which pass for flies in Sutherland. Thus it came about that we lunched early in the day. We both detest mustard, and fairhaired, blue-eyed Christina, the maid of the inn, in a moment of forgetfulness-for she well knew our dislikes in that respect—had liberally mustarded the sandwiches. M., I suppose, hates mustard more than I do, for he ate no lunch at all, and, possibly to work off his justifiable wrath, and because he is fond of mountaincering, started off up a big Ben something—a rash act on an empty stomach.

Meanwhile the gillie and I got into the boat, and while he rowed towards the head of the loch, I took a cast or two, but without rising anything. In a few minutes I noticed that we were in running water, and, looking up, saw in front of me a small river tumbling into the loch by a series of picturesque waterfalls. This stream o' the North I quickly decided to explore, and was soon on shore, clambering among the rocks, picking up here a trout and there a

trout, for the fish, which were of respectable dimensions, rose freely.

I confess that, for choice, I would sooner fish a stream of this kind—a stream which rushes and foams and roars among rocks and boulders, taking a course through miles of wild moorland scenery. To wander through country which has been unchanged for ages—a country untouched by the hand of man, beautiful in its savage wildness; to be in perpetual exercise; to breathe the pure, invigorating mountain air; and last, but far from least, to catch trout after trout—all these lend a perfectly indescribable charm to moorland fishing.

Regardless of the time, I wandered up this breezy moorland stream, carefully fishing every eddy and stickle, till suddenly, after walking up a narrow gorge, I found myself on the banks of a good-sized loch, the surface of which was still as glass, for steep hills sheltered it from the wind. Without meaning it, I had made my way to Loch Number Three.

The water, as I have said, was calm, and the sun shone brightly. However, noticing that a good many fish were rising, I took a few casts from the bank, letting my fly go as well as I was able into the ripples caused by the rises. But this was futile, and, after making a long cast, I began talking to the gillie, leaving my line in the water. Slowly the fly sank, until it probably reached the bottom, and there lay, while I endeavoured to extract some information

from the Highlander, a proceeding rarely attended with success. Turning to retrace my steps, I gently raised my line off the bottom, and had brought the fly nearly to the top, when there came a tug at the top of the rod, and I found myself in a trout which, on being landed, proved to be a little over half a pound. I did not retrace my steps, but took another cast, let the fly sink, drew it up gently, and this time pricked a fish. As a matter of fact, I had accidentally found out how to catch the trout of this lake this calm, sunny afternoon, and, making the most of my newly-acquired knowledge, I soon added considerably to my basket.

Anxious to explore the loch, I pushed on rather quickly, and came to where the river ran in. Here were shallows formed by rocks and sand washed down by many a winter flood, and on them the trout literally swarmed. M. all this time was somewhere on the mountain, so I sent the gillie back to try and find him, and tell him where we had got to. I now had to look after the landing-net and basket myself. The former, having an awkwardly long handle, I dispensed with; the latter, becoming heavy, I placed the shore beside me. Wading now became necessary, for I had either caught or 'put down' most of the fish within casting distance of the shore. I had no waders, but, having confidence in the hot sun, took off boots and stockings and waded in. Then the midges found me out, and soon, from the

edge of the tucked-up knickerbockers to the waterline, my legs were covered with a black band of the venomous insects. They were so thick that they jostled one another, and I verily believe interfered with each other's feeding arrangements. Not that they failed to bite, but the punishment was less than I should have expected. The experience was unique and satisfying.

Fortunately the trout kept rising, and they were worthy the name of fish, going two or three to the pound, some, indeed, weighing \( \frac{3}{4} \) lb.—very different to the fingerlings usually caught in Sutherlandshire lochs. While the gillie was away a funny incident occurred. My creel, which was now half full, was, as I said, on the bank. A particularly lively trout which I had omitted to kill began leaping inside it, and after a few endeavours knocked open the lid. Then he leapt out, and before I could get to him had, by a series of jumps, reached the water. I chased him over the shallows with the landing-net, but he finally escaped by bolting up the river. About this time the gillie returned, saying M. was fishing the lower lake, and hoped I should not be long. People in mosquito countries are said to get quite hardened in the matter of mosquitoes, but this Highlander, though born and bred near the place, had a bad time of it with the midges. For a while he stood quietly, landing-net in hand, only uttering an exclamation every now and then when a midge found out a tender spot; but finally he gave up the unequal battle, cast down the net, and, fleeing a little inland, took off his coat, wrapped up his head in it, and buried himself as deeply as possible in the heather. I had too much to do to look after the fast-rising trout to mind those little pests, which, making due allowance for difference in size, are infinitely more poisonous than rattlesnakes.

About four or five o'clock the heat became intense, the trout ceased to rise, and the midges bit ferociously; so I waded to shore, dried my legs in the sun, and donned shooting boots and gaiters. Then the gillie came out from his retreat in the heather, and we were about to start for the lower loch, where M. was awaiting us, when I noticed a silvery ripple at the other end of the loch. The ripple came nearer, it spread over the whole expanse of water, and a delicious breeze in one instant almost wafted away those cursed midges. One may be excused for being a trifle greedy on the last day, and I lingered for another cast or two over the dancing water, which looked far more fishable than before. Now the trout took on the surface, and a right merry time I had of it. Very soon boots and gaiters were again cast off, and I was again on those shallows, my legs buried in the icy cold water coming down from the burn. M. appearing in the distance, I sent the gillie to ask him to join in the fun; but he had done walking enough, so came no nearer. I had to give

up at last, leaving the fish still rising, for dinner in most Sutherlandshire hotels is in the nature of a *table d'hôte*, and I found we had only about ten minutes in which to walk five or six miles.

Walking back round the lake, I stopped an instant to cast off a small point, by the side of which trickled in a tiny burn, and near which fish were rising. Here I accomplished what I have never done before nor since—caught ten trout in ten casts, missed the eleventh rise, and then took fish on the twelfth and thirteenth casts. It was not a matter of skill. The fly had only to be placed over the fish. On getting down to Loch Number Two we found M. sitting on a rock in anything but that good humour which is to him, as it were, one of the 'standing orders' of life. He proved most conclusively that I was a selfish brute in keeping him away from his dinner so long. For some reason or another he had made a poor breakfast—an offence against the common law of Scotland; had taken no lunch, for reasons stated; then, having gone up a mountain, and come down in a half-famished condition, found he had missed the day of the season on Loch Number Three. I showed him my creel full to overflowing. It availed me nothing, and moderated his wrath not one whit. What were a few paltry trout compared with the crime of being late for dinner! However, when we got back to the inn, had done justice to Scotch broth, Scotch sea trout, Scotch mutton, and, above all, Scotch ale, the clouds rolled away, and over the last pipe M. confessed that had he been there he would have seen that rise out, dinner or no dinner.

And so the day ended pleasantly enough.





### CHAPTER XIV

ON A MAY DAY

UCH a lovely day for you!'

The remark was made at breakfast, and the speaker was a lady who knew not the desires and needs of fishermen.

The 'lovely day' was thus composed:—Item: bright blue sky. Item: keen, cold north-east wind. Item: dust flying; no rain for a fortnight. Item: an all-powerful, dazzling sunlight. No, it was decidedly not a 'lovely day' for me, and right earnestly did I grumble that my one chance of visiting a certain choice chalk-stream in the South-west of England should have fallen on such a day. I had wandered about the banks of the river previously to make its acquaintance; and, said the keeper, 'You must be on the water by ten o'clock. There is no rise in the afternoon, and the evenings are too cold.' So I was there by nine-thirty, and propose to relate—there being somewhat of a moral to the story—more or less exactly, what fell out.

If there is one greater charm than another about fly-fishing, at least in comparison with other branches of our craft, it is that so little is required in the way of tackle. Rod, reel, a book and landing-net, and one's outfit is complete. I thought this as I walked some half-mile or more over the flowery fields to get to the upper water, which had appeared to be the most fishy part of the river. Some trees sheltered Barry, my little gillie, and myself from the wind, and the sun poured down and simply broiled us.

'There's a fish!' cried Barry; 'such a big one!'

The water, it is needless to say, was low and clear as crystal, and it flowed over a bright gravelly bottom on which grew patches of waving green weeds. In a tiny pool between two weed-beds, and so small that a tablecloth might have covered it, were two good trout—good for the water I mean—rising freely to the duns, which were beginning to hatch out and come down the stream. Clearly a dry fly was necessary, but it was a most awkward place to fish after that fashion without drag. But where one can see a trout, and that trout be feeding, if the fly can be put lightly just over his nose, he will, nine times out of ten, take it before it has time to drift or drag.

I put up an olive dun, crawled as near as I dared, made a false cast or two to get the distance, and by good luck dropped the fly exactly where I had aimed it. The fish had it immediately, and before he had time to turn or show fight I had him out of that pool and on to a shallow below, where there were neither weeds nor trout. Barry officiated with the landingnet, and we found that our prey was a well-conditioned 1½-lb. trout. So carefully had this fish been taken that his companion in the pool had not been disturbed, and so, after waiting a few minutes for my fly to thoroughly dry in the sun (the more dry the fly, the lighter it falls, a consideration sometimes when it has to be put just over a fish), I determined to try again at the same spot.

I think I have never seen trout more clearly than on that day. Each pool was a small aquarium, and every feeding fish was as clearly visible as if it had been in a glass globe. I could even see the gills of this trout opening and shutting; but by repeating the manœuvre which had already proved successful I caused those gills to open and shut for the last time. This to the great delight of Barry, who looked upon himself as a very important factor in the capture.

We pushed on up-stream a little, after this good beginning to the day, and seeing half a dozen fish feeding in a fast-running piece of water, I squatted down on the grass and determined to have one of them before I moved. Here I could not see the fish plainly, owing to the ripple on the water, but there was no doubt about their rises. There was a splendid

show of duns, and with a dark olive I caught most of my fish; but a brace were taken on that excellent fly for a bright day, Wickham's fancy.

Well, I sat for a while and watched the fish, as I love to do, sometimes even when I might be catching them, and noticed that the duns were many, and that the trout seemed particular, not taking all that went over them by any means. Therefore, when I proceeded to tempt one, I was not at all discouraged to find that six casts failed to produce a rise. It was a case in which, so far as my experience goes, good may be done by sticking to a fish. So I stuck to that trout, but always casting carefully, and keeping low and out of sight. Once he rose short, but at the very next cast he took the fly in a most genteel manner, played nobly, and was taken down stream and landed. Oh! my young friends (you old ones know all about it), always remember to pull your fish down stream. You do not disturb the water above you, you kill your trout quickly, and you successfully negotiate the most awful weeds, which, had you taken your fish up, or immediately across the stream, would have done for you at once.

That one small run yielded me two brace of trout, not half of which would have been caught had I not led them quickly, quietly, and at once down stream.

Leaving this productive piece of water, we walked up the river's bank, through meads made beautiful by

marsh marigolds and cuckoo-flowers, until we came to a pool overhung by an alder. The water rushed into it through a somewhat narrow channel, in the neck of which Barry's quick eyes detected the rise of a trout. We laid on the grass a while here and watched this fish, and in the clear sunlight I could see him every now and again leave the eye of the eddy and roam round, but never rising except when he came into the little run at the head of the pool, where duns were floating to their destruction. Creeping up under the shadow of the alder-tree, I waited for my friend to make his little promenade and then took a cast into the rough water. He rose at once, but short, and five times he thus treated me. I was fishing wet at this spot, but it did not take long to get the olive dun into a dry condition. Then I cast the fly a little higher than previously, and a queer thing happened. A small trout, possibly a yearling, jumped at the fly and drowned it, and a second later the large fish took it (the fly) under water.

Then I had a rare treat. The alder-tree prevented the down-stream manœuvre, and I had to keep the fish in the pool. Right gallantly he fought, and I found myself wishing that for once my tackle had been other than the finest. Gradually he grew weaker and weaker, and I drew him to the only possible place along the bank. Barry reached down with the landing-net, when, with a sudden renewal of

strength, the fish suddenly turned sharply to the left, and threaded the line right through the roots of the alder

'Oh, Barry! Barry! why were you not quicker?' was my plaint; but no one was to blame, unless it was the idiot who had planted the alder.

I gave up that fish, and set about the recovery of my fly, when, there below the tree was my friend, as done as a fish could well be, and waving from side to side in the stream which he no longer had strength to stem. Poor thing! he deserved to escape; but which of us gets our desserts? He weighed 2 lb., and cut pink as a sea trout at dinner that evening.

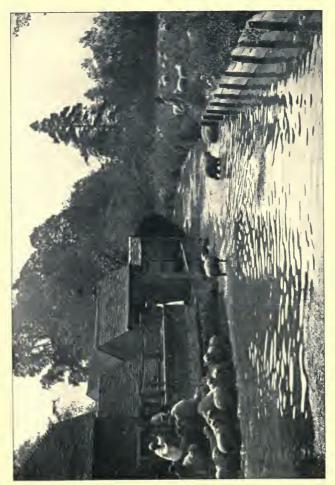
This charming water was managed by a club, and one of my kind hosts now appeared walking up the stream. He did not ask me if I had taken any trout, but at once commenced a vigorous grumble at the weather, and at his bad fortune in living so far from the stream that he never knew what the day was likely to be when he started. He had given up fishing, thinking it useless. The best of the rise was over, so I did not add to his vexation by lifting the lid of my basket, but merely said that possibly a fish or two might be picked up by sticking to it. Oh no! he was quite sure it was no good; and we said good morning and parted.

Still wandering up stream, we came upon a pretty rustic scene, similar to that shown in the illustration. A flock of long-fleeced sheep were intended to feed

off the fresh lush grass and marsh marigolds in a water-meadow on the other side of the river. At first none would cross the ford below the mill, notwith-standing the most energetic barking of the collie and pointmelling of the shepherd. Finally, the sheepmaster called a miller to his assistance, and, seizing some of the sheep, they unceremoniously pitched them over the camp-sheathing into the river. When a dozen had been thus treated and marched in melancholy fashion to the other side, the rest followed without this gentle persuasion. It was a rare place for a trout when undisturbed.

How I caught a trout here, and lost another there, need not be related, but an event that morning forms one of those angler's stories which no one believes, and is therefore worthy of place in this trustworthy narration. We had passed under a railway-bridge, and were standing close by the edge of the river, with the embankment rising behind us. Immediately at our feet was a quiet pool about five feet in depth, in which four or five trout were quietly swimming about without noticing us; doubtless because, as I have said, we had the embankment for a background. Fish are not quick to see anglers thus situated, but place yourself between them and any portion of the sky, and in a second every trout is hidden.

At the tail of the pool a trout rose to a gnat, and I cast carelessly over him, and put him down most



"WE CAME UPON A PRETTY RUSTIC SCENE,"



thoroughly. But the others took no heed, and, leaving my line on the water, I continued to watch them. It was a pretty sight indeed—every pebble on the bottom as clearly seen as if there had been no water in the river, and those five fine trout, all well over I lb., swimming about in the clear water. Barry, who regularly feeds at I.30 P.M., murmured something about lunch, and, as I turned to go away, I lifted my line up slowly. As the fly, which had sunk to the bottom almost at my feet, came towards the surface, one of the trout suddenly turned, rushed at it, hooked himself, and was landed after a brief fight. I tried this unsportsmanlike method in other pools, but did not meet with any more lunatic trout.

The rise for the morning was now over, and the keeper, telling me that I need not expect any more fish until the evening, and perhaps not then, owing to the cold north-east wind, I left off fishing for the day at two o'clock, well-satisfied with five and a half brace of fish. Indeed, I was more than satisfied, for can there be anything more gratifying than to make a good basket of trout under unfavourable and unpromising conditions? After all, a nor'-easter is not always a bad wind for streams where duns abound. But the clear water and bright sun were unmixed evils. The moral, of course, is, whatever the weather, stick to it. Do not grunt and groan and growl,

and take a few casts and give up, but do your level best, and more often than not your perseverance will be rewarded. On returning to my temporary home I shamefacedly confessed that after all it really had been a 'lovely day.'





## CHAPTER XV

### SALMON-FISHING BY PHONOGRAPH

NE bitterly cold night, when New York
State had just put on its white snowmantle, those hospitable people, the
Vanderhagens, were entertaining a select

few of their numerous friends and acquaintances at their luxurious and well-appointed house in Fifth Avenue. One of the guests was a wealthy young Englishman named Pierpoint, not long returned from Canada, where he had been salmon-fishing, and was going to winter in New York with the Vanderhagens. Signor Pizzicato was there, and not only played music of his own composition, but also accompanied his niece, Miss, or, I should say Signorina, Squallissimo on the piano. Then there was an African traveller, of whom the most dreadful things were whispered, and who was much run after in consequence, and the inevitable foreign nobleman wearing the inevitable decoration.

But the great success of the evening, which caused even the foreign nobleman to be neglected. was an insignificant-looking little combination of metal and wax, no larger than a small sewingmachine, which performed marvels the like of which had never been heard or dreamt of. It was, in short, the phonograph, which had at that time only been exhibited to a few intimate friends of the inventor. This little machine talked to the company, piped, fiddled, trumpeted, and drummed for them, sang. songs, coughed, laughed, cried, sneezed, stuttered, and finally ravished the guests by giving 'Yankee Doodle' on fifteen wind instruments at once. The African traveller made a short speech in native dialect, which the wonderful little machine entered on its waxen tablet, and faithfully reproduced. Signorina Squallissimo's highest of high notes were similarly preserved for posterity.

An hour later Pierpoint was sitting in the cosy smoking-room with Mr. Vanderhagen and a few intimate friends, who had been invited to remain after the others had left to witness a more private exhibition of the wonderful talking-machine. The phonograph was for the moment not working properly, and the operator was adjusting the steel knife, and then trying it on one of the wax cylinders which take the record of sound. Meanwhile those present entered into conversation, and Mr. Vanderhagen asked Pier-

point the weight of the largest salmon he had taken in Canada.

'The largest fish was 34 lb.,' said the Englishman; and on being asked further questions, gave an interesting account of its capture, from the time it first rose to that exciting moment when Indian Jim landed it. Said Mr. Vanderhagen:

'That was real exciting, Mr. Pierpoint; and I enjoyed your account of it because it was so obviously free from exaggeration. Now, one of our New York anglers would have added 10 lb. to the weight of the fish, fifty yards on to the line it ran out, made it play for at least three hours, and would quite have forgotten that Indian Jim came up at the critical moment and cleverly landed it.'

'English anglers are sometimes likened to Ananias,' replied Pierpoint, with a laugh; 'but the account I gave you was absolutely true.'

'Not a doubt of it,' said Mr. Vanderhagen, and, turning to the person in charge of the phonograph, asked if the talking-machine was ready.

'I fixed it up ten minutes ago, but did not like to interrupt the fish story,' said the operator, and forthwith proceeded to further demonstrate the wonderful powers of the instrument.

A few years later Pierpoint formed one of a merry party keeping Christmas in a quaint old half-timbered country house in the heart of Devonshire. It was a

good old-fashioned Christmas, of the type that Washington Irving has so charmingly described in his 'Sketch Book.' There was a yule log; there were mummers, waits and carol singers; holly and mistletoe galore, Christmas doles to the villagers, much good cheer, of course; and fun, merriment, and goodhumour on all sides. One evening after dinner, while some venerable port was being consumed, the conversation turned to fishing, and Pierpoint related some of his Canadian experiences. The story of his big salmon had been often told since that night at the Vanderhagens', and, as often happens, the teller had from time to time, almost without knowing it, introduced certain details and variations, which certainly had the effect of making it more exciting. But, with perfect good faith, Pierpoint commenced by saying:

'Now, mind, this is a true story, though I don't expect you fellows to believe it. I had been fishing for four hours without a rise, when, coming to a huge pool below a magnificent waterfall, I noticed in a quiet eddy at the side of the torrent a sudden swell in the water, and a broad tail showed itself for a second and then disappeared. The fish was clearly a monster, such as had never before, perhaps, been seen in the river. I gave him a few minutes to recover his position, and then east. The line went out beautifully straight, and the fly hardly touched the water before the fish had it. With a flourish of his tail he went

down head foremost, but a second later, feeling the prick of the steel, he made one frantic rush, taking out 150 yards of line, and then leapt three times out of the water. Next he bolted with me for nearly two miles down stream. Sometimes I was swimming, sometimes climbing along the face of the cliff, which came down to the water's edge. More dead than alive, I at last found myself outside that awful gorge, and more determined than ever to kill that fish, or be killed in the doing of it. Finding leaps and rushes of no avail, the monster next sulked for over an hour. It was not until he had been on nearly three hours that he began to show signs of weakness. I myself was in an almost exhausted condition, but, seizing my opportunity, I waded in, and pulling myself together, gaffed the fish, which was lying on its side in an eddy behind a rock. Luckily I had a huntingknife in my belt, for if I had not stuck it into his brain he would have overcome me in my exhausted condition, and got off the gaff. After a long rest I was able to carry home my prize. It weighed 44 lb. 2 02.

'To-night,' said the squire at the close of the story, 'I must cut short our wine, as I have got over from Exeter the man who has been exhibiting the phonograph there. I think you will all be amused.'

Pierpoint said he was sure they would, and that he had seen the instrument in New York.

In the drawing-room they found the lecturer already at work amusing the children and ladies.

'Now that you have come,' said he to the squire, 'I will put on an interesting record made of an angling story.' The men crowded round the machine, which almost immediately began to talk. First there were a few words of conversation between two men, who from their accents were obviously an Englishman and an American. Presently the former began to tell the story:

'On the river is a miniature waterfall, and in the run below this I saw a fish rise. I cast over him, and was very glad to see him take the fly, as I had caught nothing for two days. I struck, and the fish at once went straight across the river, taking out 80 yds. or 90 yds. of line. He then leaped once, and went away down stream for about half a mile. . Once I had to go into the water over my knees owing to a projecting bush, and had to climb round a large rock. The fish sulked for some time, but at the end of about an hour was quite played out. I had no gaff, but fortunately an Indian who was looking on had a large sea-fishing hook with him, which he lashed on to a stick with a tough piece of weed. Four times I brought the fish nearly up to the improvised gaff, but the stream ran too strong by the bank, and finally Indian Jim had to wade in, and had quite a struggle with the fish

before he was safely landed. He weighed 34 lb., and was the largest I caught in Canada.'

At first Pierpoint had not recognised his own words, spoken years before at the Vanderhagens', but when he did realise the fact that the New York operator had made a secret record of his story, his feelings may be better imagined than described. However, he alone knew who was the story-teller, and, so far, he was all right. At the end of the account of the salmon's capture the phonographer stopped the machine, and Pierpoint heaved a sigh of relief. But the pause was only to call attention to the fact that a conversation which followed the story would next be given.

'That,' continued the remorseless machine, 'was real exciting, Mr. Pierpoint; and I enjoyed your account of it, because it was so obviously free from exaggeration. Now, one of our New York anglers would have added 10 lb. to the weight of the fish, fifty yards on to the line it ran out, made it play for at least three hours, and would quite have forgotten that Indian Jim came up at the critical moment, and cleverly landed it.'

'Ha! ha! English anglers are sometimes likened to Ananias, but the account I gave you was absolutely true.'

The phonograph had spoken. There were shouts of uncontrollable laughter, and—but let the curtain

be dropped here. Suffice to say that Pierpoint, while reluctantly conceding that Edison may be a very clever fellow, declines to admit that he is one of the benefactors of the human race.





## CHAPTER XVI

#### THE SALMON OF LOCH CARPETBAG

OU will catch no fesh on the loch until we have a right spate,' my gillie had said to me on my arrival in the North.

Now, ten days later, the 'right spate'

had come and gone, both river and lake appeared in first-class order, and it was the turn of L. and myself to cast our lines over that particular water, *the* choicest salmon and sea-trout fishing in the place.

Search the map of Scotland as you may you will not, in all probability, discover the word 'Carpetbag'; but far up in the North, near the sea, may be seen a small lake, connected with the ocean by a mile-and-a-half-long river, rejoicing in a name which bears a strong phonetic resemblance to it. As a matter of fact, the loch was re-christened by one who preferred honest English to Gaelic, and I have taken the liberty, without in any way wishing to appear pedantic, of adopting the new spelling.

Scated at breakfast that morning, one thing alone oppressed the minds of L and myself: a misty cloud o'erhung the big mountain which towered like a mighty ash-heap to the castward, and, according to local authorities, when Ben Ashheap puts on his nightcap, the salmon will not rise in the lake. As I afterwards discovered that the salmon there only rise about once in three weeks, and as Ben Ashheap is on most days adorned as to his head with a covering of mist, there is undoubtedly some foundation for the statement, which, by the way, is of wide application.

With us at breakfast was one 'Brawl,' who kindly gave me some valuable hints about the fishing, but, on looking over our fly-books, reduced us to a state of despair by the information that we had not a single fly small enough for the water. However, he soon turned our despair into joy by the kindly loan of a dozen capital little flies, for which we were, and had good reason to be, exceedingly grateful. For generosity and good-nature commend me to anglers!

From the breakfast-room to the lake was a distance of about a mile and a half, through a narrow valley enclosed by somewhat precipitous heather-clad hills, cloud-topped mountains forming a splendid background. Our path lay for the most part close by the side of a foaming, rushing, roaring river, full of big boulders, pools, eddies, and rapids—to my mind, the perfection of an angler's stream, where the

fish, on feeling the prick of the deadly steel, leap and dash and rush like the bright water they live in, fighting bravely for their lives.

Acting on 'Brawl's' advice, I carefully fished some of the larger pools with a grilse fly, but only rose one small sea trout. L. soon became impatient at my non-success, so I joined him, and we walked quickly on towards the loch. As we went I managed, where the path ran sufficiently close to the river, a rapid cast or two, but hardly with hope that such careless fishing would meet with any success. However, having pitched my fly into a tiny eddy, I had the satisfaction—especially as the gillie had just remarked, 'No fesh there!'—of seeing a gleam of silver in the water, and the dissatisfaction of striking without finding my line tighten in the slightest degree.

'I must have this fellow,' I said to L.; but he, being anxious to get on to the loch, did not stop to see the result, the gillie bearing him company.

Five casts I made over that fish, and five times he rose; but at the fifth rise my turn came, and the fun commenced. I at first put the fish down to be a grilse which had been for some time in the river, for he had not a leap in him; but he made up for lack of high-jumping powers by rushes and dashes and eel-like dives under stones and little falls. L. and the gillie were still in sight, not fifty yards away; but I suppose my shouts for the landing-net were drowned

in the roaring of the water, for neither of them came to my assistance.

But there must be an end to all things, and, by great good fortune, my line not cutting on the rocks, I at last wearied the fish out; or rather he wearied himself, and, turning over on his side, I saw my eccentric friend was a silvery, fresh-run sea trout. was hooked by the anal fin, which accounted for everything, including possibly his not leaping. So hooked, I could not turn him, and though he might get his head under rocks, his tail projected, and the line escaped the sharp edges. I quickly clambered down the bank and, tightly grasping the now thoroughly played-out fish across the gills, threw him high and dry far above me among the heather. He weighed just under 3 lb. In five minutes' time I was at the boathouse near the lower end of the lake, where I found L. sitting in a leaky old boat waiting for me.

Loch Carpetbag is, from an angling point of view, a rather peculiar piece of water. It is throughout very narrow, weedy, and shallow; but at one place, called the 'narrows,' it is not more than fifteen yards wide. These 'narrows' have a length of about forty yards, and then expand into the smaller half of the lake, which is only a few acres in extent. Through the narrow portion generally flows a slight stream, and I should say, from the number of fish I saw leaping, the bottom must be pretty well paved with

salmon. The only other casts were from two points, the Green and the Black Point respectively, at top of the larger half of the lake. From lack of wind the Black Point was the only fishable piece of water at that time, and, leaving L. to flog for salmon, I returned to the river, intent on making up a brace or so of my favourite fish. Whether or not it was owing to the nightcap on Ben Ashheap I do not know, but the trout rose badly—few and short—and my labours only resulted in two small fish.

About one o'clock the gillie joined me, bringing intelligence that L. had hooked, played, and lost a fine (for Carpetbag) salmon of about 12 lb. weight; also that there was now a good ripple on the 'narrows,' and I had better come and try them. In a work devoted in most part to a description of the shooting and fishing to be obtained in the North of Scotland, I had read that with a breeze on these narrows sport was certain. Previous experience had led me to believe that in angling sport is, under *no* circumstances, certain; but, hopeful of a new experience, I hurried off, fixed up a salmon rod, and was soon doing my best with one of 'Brawl's' neatly tied silver doctors.

'With a breeze sport is certain,' I kept murmuring to myself as I cast over and over again. Nothing rose. A change of fly to Jock Scott, butcher, and blue doctor produced no better results, and at the end of two hours the stimulating effect of, and my

belief in, the quotation having evaporated, I left the 'narrows' without regret, L. taking my place.

The next best thing to do was to board the little boat and drift for sea trout, but I found the breeze too light for that. About three o'clock the salmon commenced jumping madly in most parts of the lake—nearly always a bad sign—but would not look at a fly. The leaping fit lasted about a quarter of an hour, when a fierce squall of wind came down from the mountain, making it impossible for the gillie to manage the boat. The jumping of the salmon and subsequent squall reminded me of an interesting fact I learned from the fishermen in Ireland, namely, that when lake trout leap, windy weather is sure to follow. Such was certainly the case on the Shannon, and I have no doubt is so in many other places.

Rather curiously, the fish had not leapt in the 'narrows,' possibly because they looked upon the place as a short river, and considered it unorthodox to leap before wind anywhere but in a loch. L., seeing fish splashing about everywhere but where he was fishing, changed his position to the Black Point, and there cast patiently until the close of the day, but his patience was unrewarded. Meanwhile I took up my old position, and fished all I knew.

Salmon do queer things sometimes; but I found it hard to believe my gillie, who advised me to stick to this wretched little stretch of water, notwithstanding that it had been most unmercifully thrashed

during the greater part of a day. L. had hooked his fish on a small silver doctor; and, feeling that when the salmon were not rising it was but little use to make many changes, I stuck to a similar fly, often sinking it until it must almost have rubbed the noses of a fish or two. If the mountain declines to visit Mahomet, then Mahomet visits the mountain. In the same way, if the fish will not come to the fly, then the fly must go to the fish—especially on bright, calm days. There are three degrees of fish appetite. First—reversing the usual order—the superlative. when the fish is 'real' hungry, and, catching the slightest glimpse of a fly, rushes at it immediately; secondly, the comparative, when the fly must be placed before the nose of the fish before he will deign to look at it; and, thirdly, the positive want of appetite, when the fish positively declines to look at, much less take into his mouth, either fly or bait. As a general rule, the fish of Loch Carpetbag have positive want of appetites, and there seemed no likelihood of my breaking the traditions of the place that afternoon.

An hour and a half of hard work thoroughly exhausted my patience.

'Go and ask Mr. L. how long he means to continue fishing,' I said to our gillie, who went off.

'Three casts more,' I thought to myself, 'and then, farewell Carpetbag.'

There was just one spot in which I had not thrown

a fly, for the simple reason that it seemed a most unlikely place to hold a fish, being shallow, out of the stream, and partly covered with a green slime. Is it not the frequent happening of the unexpected in angling which gives that delightful sport its greatest charm?

For my third and last cast I sent my fly into this unlikely spot, and worked it nearly to the bank. Suddenly a dark shadow appeared in the water, came leisurely towards and seized my fly, and sunk as quickly as it had risen. I struck, for there was no chance of this fish hooking himself, as salmon mostly do, and the battle commenced. Hither and thither the fish rushed, not once leaving the 'narrows,' and without a single leap—different indeed from the same fish had he been hooked in a river. I wish I could now record the capture of a splendid salmon, but cannot, for in ten minutes' time a plump, fresh-run grilse of a little under 61b. was in the landing-net. Of course I now fished away with renewed vigour, and of course nothing came of it; so, taking down our salmon rods, L. and I strolled slowly towards home, by the river.

It still wanted an hour of dinner-time, so here and there I took a cast with my trout rod, on which was the fine tackle I had been using for sea trout on the loch. Never, never, never fish a stream containing salmon with more than one fly, even though fishing only for sea trout. Sooner or later a salmon is cer-

tain to be hooked, when one of your flies will catch in a rock, weeds, or the bottom, and you lose fish, tackle, and temper. I knew this well enough, but was too lazy to change my cast.

Sending my flies halfway down the tail of a big pool, I saw a great boil in the water, my second dropper was seized, and to the bottom dashed a big salmon. I shouted to L., who had the landing-net, for the gillie had gone on with the fish, so that we might have the luxury of a freshly-killed grilse for dinner. L. had been taking a few casts ahead of me for salmon, but heard me, and hurried back.

'Give him plenty of time!' said he, seeing my little trout rod was bending nearly double.

'But the fish is hooked on the second dropper,' I replied, 'and I must keep him off the bottom, or the tail-fly is certain to catch in the rocks. See if you can't swoop him into the net the next time he shows himself; the tackle can't bear the strain much longer!'

Just then the fish, which had been quietly sulking, gave a little to the pressure I was putting on him, and I felt that in a second L. would have his chance. Inch by inch the line showed above the water, the first dropper came in view, and L. bent eagerly down with the landing-net. It was a critical moment. Would such a big fish allow himself to be pulled up like a log to the surface in this way? Not he. Just as the shadow of his broad back appeared in the

water he gave an angry and sudden jag with his head, and, sad to relate, the gut snapped where partly frayed by the working of the dropper on which the salmon was hooked. Of course I picked out a fresh and stronger cast, and fished as long as daylight lasted, and of course I did not rise another salmon; but I managed to add a half-pound brown trout to the basket, while L. secured a brace of fine sea trout.

Thus ended that day on Loch Carpetbag—unsatisfactory on the whole, but not a little instructive. I must say I am not particularly enamoured of fishing for salmon in lakes, unless it be in the few in which superlative, or, at any rate, comparative, appetites are the rule, and not the exception, as in Loch Carpetbag.





# CHAPTER XVII

# TROUT PROBLEMS

some amiable genius were to offer the enthusiastic owner of a trout-fishery the gratification of his piscine desires, limiting them, let us say, to four, the said owner

would probably wish that his trout might be free risers, large, numerous, and well-conditioned early in each fishing-season. To obtain all these four qualifications for one's trout without the assistance of some accommodating good spirit is, I take it, the greatest problem of all connected with the most popular of our game fishes.

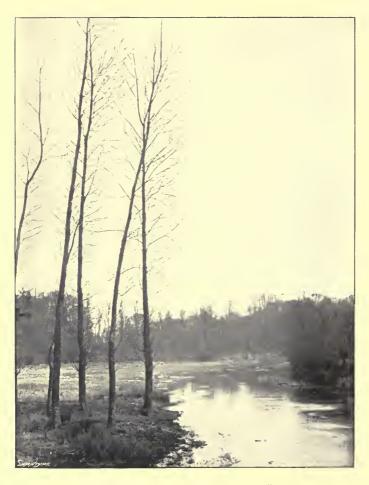
In the first place, where trout are very numerous they are rarely very large. Secondly, where they are large it usually happens they are not free risers, and this is more particularly the case where they owe their size to a liberal diet of coarse fish; as, for example, in the Thames and parts of the Kennet. Again, trout may be even small and numerous, and

yet not be free risers, though happily this is rarely the case, and the calamity is more often met with in lakes than in rivers. The key to the problem—so far as the size of the trout and their free-rising habits are concerned—is, I venture to suggest, to be found in the word food; but the lock is a mighty difficult one to open, and, as a matter of fact, though the key is to hand, no one up to the present has been able to turn it in a really satisfactory manner.

Of course, when a fishery has for years been maintained in a high degree of excellence, it is obvious that what has been done in the past has only to be repeated in the future, provided, of course, new blood is occasionally introduced; but the great majority of trout-fisheries do not maintain a high degree of excellence; and for them or their owners these remarks are intended.

To have trout in great numbers is not so much a matter of food as of pure water and careful preservation. Trout abound in moorland and mountain streams because the water is pure, and therefore a large percentage of the eggs hatch out. Though sewage-pollution, if not too strong, is favourable to the growth of the fry, it is fatal to trout eggs, and unfortunately there are very few streams in the South of England which are not more or less so polluted. But, even with sewage-pollution to contend against, the stream can be stocked easily and cheaply. Yearling trout can now be bought for 10% per





"WHERE SHALLOW SUCCEEDS SHALLOW."

thousand, and at that price no fishery ought to be left unstocked. The stream should, of course, be kept as clean as possible. Gravelly shallows should be raked over occasionally, some (not all) of the mud removed, pike, perch, and chub netted out, and aged trout ruthlessly slain by fair means or foul. Some of the most perfect spawning-grounds I have ever seen are in the Lambourne, where shallow succeeds shallow, over which flows the bright sparkling stream, pure almost as it issues from the chalk hills.

To get a good head of trout is no difficult matter, but to have them large, in good condition and free risers is quite another thing; and that brings me back to the question of food. As a novice who wishes to build a boat would be wise to first carefully examine some shapely craft, so may we, who wish to build a lusty, shapely, free-rising trout, take a fish with those estimable qualities as our model, and consider how he was brought into existence. For the largest and most handsome fish we must go to the Thames; but here evidently is no model, for our big Thames trout cares little for the fly. But let him be studied for his size. He feeds mainly on fish, as anyone can see with half an eye who has watched him chasing the bleak—aye, and sometimes good-sized roach—at his meal-times. He is large because of his large food. and he disdains flies for the same reason-viz. that he is accustomed to big things. De minimis non curat Salmo Thamesis. In his young days, however,

when with smaller appetite and capacity he is satisfied with smaller kinds of food, then he will rise to the fly freely. From the example of the Thames trout, therefore, it would seem that big food and plenty of it makes big fish but bad risers.

Pass on now to other large trout—those found in the Kennet, say, below Newbury. Here coarse fish also abound, and the trout feeds much as does his cousin in the Thames, and rises badly to the fly. But there is this difference. Once a year comes a great rise of luscious Mayflies, and then their lordships of Kennet forsake for a while their fish diet, and gorge themselves with Ephemeridæ. From these fish, then, we learn that even a fish-feeding trout will become a fly-taker provided there is a sufficiency of large flies. But come now to Hampshire, where, in the chalk streams, the next largest fish are to be found, and here we have an approach to the ideal. The fish are plentiful, they are large, and they rise fairly well to a fly, hence they are justly celebrated. But why do they rise? That is the point to be worked out. In the first place, there being few coarse fish in these rivers, the food of the trout is limited to small things; in the second place, immense hatches of duns and other flies take place far more than on Thames or Kennet (except in the Mayfly season), and so these big fish find it worth their while to now and again rise to the surface and lazily suck in fly after fly. Here clearly are the models of which we are in

search, and from which the food lesson is to be learned. In these chalk streams is a great abundance of small insect food—shrimps, snails, larvæ of flies, &c. On these the trout fatten and grow big, and yet retain their appetite for small things.

Though these fine trout rise fairly well, loud often are the complaints that they do not rise better, and that they are much given to bottom-feeding. Self-preservation is the first law of Nature, and it may very well be that trout which are frequently pricked, as are these, owing to the minute hooks used by dry-fly fishermen, are led, either by instinct or some reasoning power of which we know nothing, to seek safety in taking their food-supply from the bottom rather than the surface. I refer on another page to the effect of returning undersized fish to the water. In pike-fishing something almost analogous has been noticed. Where certain artificial baits have been much used, they have been found in time to lose their attractiveness. The fish, in fact, found them dangerous. In the same way, Hampshire trout may be finding that flies are dangerous, and, there being abundance of food apart from the flies, may have decided that insects with wings shall rarely appear on their menus. Another and most aweinspiring theory has been started. Anglers, it is said, are catching all the free-rising trout, and leaving the bad-rising ones to breed. The offspring of these latter inherit the instinct of their parents. This

process being continued, we should, of course, in a few years have no fly-fishing whatever, which is too bad to be true.

If any conclusion at all can be drawn from those Thames, Lower Kennet, and Hampshire trout, it is that, for the purposes of the fly-fisher, trout should have a great abundance of very small food and as many flies as possible—in other words, the food on the surface must be more attractive than, and nearly as plentiful as, the food on the bottom. If there is an excess of bottom-food, even of the smaller kinds, and a scarcity of flies, the trout are likely to become bad risers. In a small piece of water, much can be done by gathering shrimps, weeds containing snails, the larvæ of flies, &c., and placing them in suitable spots, coarse fish, of course, being netted out; but on a large river, like the Test, it is doubtful whether these operations can be carried on on a sufficiently large scale to make any very great difference in the food-supply. In the matter of flies, however, a great deal can be done. The eggs of Mayflies, duns, grannoms, &c., can be collected and hatched, and by these means new flies can be introduced to rivers, and the native flies increased in numbers. Generally speaking, trout will not rise unless they have something to rise at, and the time will certainly come when fly-breeding will be deemed almost as important as trout-breeding. As an instance of what can be done in this way, I may quote from a letter of the late Thomas Andrews, which appeared in the 'Field' on June 9, 18§8. 'Almost by an accident we introduced alder flies into my ponds a year or two ago, and during the last four or five weeks they have hatched in immense numbers—in fact, I do not remember ever having seen such a big hatch of alder on any river.' Thomas Andrews successfully bred freshwater shrimps and water snails, and experimented largely with Mayflies, grannom, &c.

A word as to grayling. It has been argued that these fish do harm by eating the food which otherwise the trout would get; but a stream which will not support a fair head of both grayling and trout must be a poor stream indeed. One question, however, does arise which appears worthy of consideration. If grayling thrive, as they do in the Kennet at Hungerford, will not the trout eat them, and make their meals on the young of the grayling, rather than on the flies, and will they not become in consequence bad risers? It is a noteworthy fact that above Hungerford, where there are no grayling, the trout rise much more freely than they do below, where the gravling are numerous. Trout seem to me to be as likely to feed on grayling as on bleak, dace, or roach, and when they feed on coarse fish they are, as has been pointed out, very bad risers to the fly, except in the Mayfly season.



# CHAPTER XVIII

## A MAYFLY YARN

rigorously *veto* the presence of his friends, and practise sufficient self-denial himself to keep away from the

river until the trout have settled down to feed freely on the winged fly, the sport would be so immeasurably superior to that of former seasons that he would for evermore institute this as a law of the Medes and Persians.'

So once wrote 'Detached Badger' in the 'Field,' and, though fully impressed with the importance of this excellent rule, especially for overstocked waters, in which a little 'immeasurably superior sport' is particularly desirable, it somehow happened that, five days or so before the rise was expected, I took down my rod, and strolled up the river with Mayflies three stuck in my cap. Perched jauntily on the very top

was a winged fly dressed after Colonel Clark's wellknown pattern. This fly, according to my friend Munchausen, is so true to Nature that there is positive risk to life in wearing it in one's cap, as occasionally a swift more daring than the rest will dart at it, and perhaps send his sharp beak into the cap-owner's brain. However, I never suffered the painful experience, and do not believe everything Munchausen says. To the right of the Clark Mayfly was an Ogden's wet gem, which is not at all a brilliantlooking fly, as might be expected from its name, but a sober-looking thing with wood-duck hackle and an indiarubber-covered straw body, which the trout take to amazingly, when they will take the wet fly at all. Then, on the left was my own particular favourite, which was based on the Francis wet fly, and is dressed with four Andalusian hackle-tips stained yellow for wings, gold-ribbed straw body, and, as legs, speckled florican hackle, dyed a yellowish green. This, then, was my not extensive battery of flies; from which it will be understood that I was not going seriously to work, but merely to speculate on Mayfly prospects, and possibly pick up a stray and erring fish. One evening, two days before, I had taken a cast or two with a wet Mayfly in a pool at the head of the water, but, beyond leaving my fly somewhere among the overhanging branches of a leafy chestnut-tree, did not effect anything remarkable. Nor did I expect to do any better on this particular morning, as I walked up the river towards a favourite shallow, pushing my way through a tangle of tall buttercups.

The sun shone as only during Mayfly weeks it can, and it need hardly be said that weed-cutting was being carried on vigorously in the upper reaches of the river. 'Down by the mill-house, where the water is very deep and the large trout do dwell, there was no disturbance of the stream, save where the swifts in their hawkings after flies ever and again breasted the surface of the water. In the shadow of the old apple-tree even, where on the hottest days fish may usually be seen feeding, there was no sign, but I made a few casts to please the children who were playing in my dear old riverside garden.

On the shallow was a veritable turmoil, and yet it cannot be said that there was any rise of fly. Now and again a Mayfly appeared, only to be seized and carried off by the swifts; but under the surface of the water the trout were revelling indeed. A great swirl here, a great swirl there, a wave half-across the river, and a splash as a Mayfly escaped from its larval case a moment before a trout would have seized it, the trout leaping vainly into the air after the newlyborn insect. Owing to the position of the sun, I could see nothing below the surface, but clearly the fish were feeding madly on the larvæ of the Mayfly. This they nearly always do during the early days of June. As the larva swims towards the surface, with the excellent intent of splitting the skin of its



"IN THE SHADOW OF THE OLD APPLE TREE,"



back, and crawling inside out—Mayfly now, and larva no longer—up bustles the trout, and adds one more to the dozen or two larvæ in his stomach. Then, if by good chance the trout are all looking the other way, and the inside-out business is consummated, down comes evil fortune in the shape—graceful enough, certainly, but cruel, as graceful things often are—in the shape of an unerring swift, which seizes the poor feeble fly and bears it out of sight.

To fish that broad, smooth shallow with the midday sun shining its very hardest seemed to me futile; so, putting on my favourite fly, I cast lightly into a shady corner under an ancient wych-elm, which overhangs the water by the side of a rustic bridge.

A great swirl. I have him—I have him not. He has it—my fly. Never again will I use that muchused and deservedly abused old fisherman's knot. If the two lengths of gut are of different thicknesses, or both rather fine, it is very unsafe. Now and again, when a little hurried, I have tried it to join on a gutpoint to a cast; but that knot must have cost me twenty good fish at the very least. It is neat and quickly made, but very unsafe.

The trout, ignorant of my mishap, were bulging about as wildly as ever on that shallow. Leaving them in peace, I put up my 'Gem' Mayfly, and went to a shady pool a little above the old wooden bridge. No words of mine can do justice to that beautiful spot; but yet some faint attempt at a description is

needful. On the opposite bank tall chestnuts, ashtrees, and elms grow close to the water's edge. At the head of the pool is a low dam, over which the water tumbles from out a large lake. Looking up the lake one can see innumerable wildfowl, and among the tree-tops patches of blue sky. On my own side of the water is a graceful group of elms and some light undergrowth. The margin of the pool, where trees are absent, is lined with waving sedges, and here and there bloom the wild monkey musk, cuckoo-flowers, marsh marigolds, and other lovely wild flowers in their season. On that hot June day the very air was busy with flies, doves were cooing in the trees above me, a cuckoo in a distant grove gave forth his two-note song; and through openings in the trees came glints of sunlight, which sparkled on the but newly-born green leaves of leafy June, and lit up the water in the centre of the pool. In front of me was a gravelly shallow, on which I could see six or seven goodly trout going round and round in their constant search after the unfortunate larvæ. Hidden by trees, I could see everything and be unobserved.

One big fellow—that is, about 2 lb., which is large for the water—swam vigorously round and round, darting every now and then out of his course to seize an ascending larva, or to chase an impudent little fish out of his path. Him I had envy to capture; but he was old and wary. Thrice he came towards my fly, and each time turned off sharply when almost at my

feet. A fourth time he came, and so quickly that I thought to hook him, when a little trout from somewhere impudently rushed up and seized the fly right in front of his grandfather's nose. After a few more casts I found the fish in the pool had become too well acquainted with the Ogden Gem, for none would take it, or even deign to turn towards it; so, as an experiment, and more particularly because I had seen one natural Mayfly taken by a trout, I put up the Clark Mayfly. This I floated carefully over numbers of feeding fish; but they would have none of it.

Looking up the pool, I noticed that where the water was deepest a trout of about 11 lb. had risen from the bottom, and was apparently basking in a ray of sunlight which fell across the pool Without the least expectation of catching him, I cast the floating fly in front of his nose. I was not disappointed. He never moved a fin. The wings of the fly being by this time more or less ruined, it occurred to me to cut them off and try the body alone, for it was not altogether a bad imitation of a larva. The first cast with this novel 'fly' was in front of my basking friend. As I drew it slowly by him he did not wink even, or show that he saw it; but when it had passed him not less than three yards, he suddenly turned, came after it about as fast as a trout can swim. I should think, seized it, and in five minutes or less was in my creel. Several other fish came after the Clark Mayfly body, and the faster it was drawn

through the water, the more attractive it seemed. At the end of about half an hour a trout a trifle smaller than the one I had already taken was hooked and duly landed.

Before leaving the pool I noticed a trout rising in an almost impossible place far under the chestnuttrees. He seemed to be really taking flies, so I put up a small alder and tried to reach him. At the third cast the fly caught in the chestnut-tree, but after a pull or two came away with what appeared to be a piece of leaf. A whisk or two with the rod failing to dislodge it from my fly, I reeled up the line, and found I had fairly caught in the bend of the hook the Mayfly lost in the branches two evenings before. After that I felt surprised at nothing, and when I saw a trout rise slowly through the water, carefully inspect, and then refuse, a natural Mayfly, it did not strike me as being particularly odd. It was, by the way, in this pool that I had lassoed a small trout round the tail—an occurrence I thought at the time unique, though from correspondence in the 'Field' something similar seems to have happened to several anglers when using more than one fly. It is not difficult to understand a trout rising at a dropper and being lassoed by the tail-fly and the line; but it is difficult to explain a trout being lassoed when a single fly is used.

The fish were still bulging here, there, and everywhere on the shallow below the bridge; but I was

satisfied with my sport, and walked homewards through the meadow, in which the haymakers were busy. On reaching the garden a large fish, rising under the apple-tree, tempted me to take another cast; but the fly rescued in such an odd manner from the chestnut-tree failed to move him, so I strolled down the river's brink towards the mill, casting casually in front of me with a line all too short. Then a puff of wind or a good fairy took the fly behind a projecting piece of sedge, a trout saw, admired, and was vanquished, and so ended that skirmish preliminary in the wars of the Mayflies.





# PART II SALT WATER





# CHAPTER I

### ANGLING IN SALT WATER

ISHING with the throw-out line from the shore, one of the earliest methods of amateur sea-fishing, was first described, so far as I can discover, in a book pub-

lished in 1724, entitled 'The Complete Fisherman.' In 1801 appeared a work called 'The Art of Angling, Rock, and Sea Fishing.' But it is only of late years that sea-fishing as a sport has been followed to any great extent by others than dwellers on the coast. The popularity of angling of all kinds has made an extraordinary increase within the last decade, and one consequence has been that it has now become difficult to obtain good fishing in fresh water by those who are not in a position to rent or purchase fisheries. Many waters which were looked upon as public have been closed, while those which have been left open have suffered severely from over-fishing, pollution, and other causes. This, perhaps, is more the case in

the Midlands and North of England than in the South; but so devoted are the followers of Isaac Walton to their favourite pastime, that we sometimes see a hundred or more anglers sitting on the banks of a canal, well knowing that the largest take of any of them at the end of the day will not exceed a pound or two of very small roach. In angling-contests prizes are sometimes won with three-quarters of an ounce of fish. It would be well to open out sea-fishing to these humble sportsmen.

Until my little book, 'Angling in Salt Water,' was published in 1887, sea-fishing generally was considered by the great bulk of *fresh*-water anglers to be a somewhat rough-and-ready process, only to be carried on with the coarse, strong gear used by professional sea-fishers, and very few regarded it as a sport. Now, however, there are not many seaside resorts at which, during the summer months, the common, or garden angler, may not be seen with rod, reel, and gut tackle, fishing according to very much the same methods as are usual on river or lake.

So favourite a branch of sport has amateur seafishing become that a 'British Sea Anglers' Society' has been formed, with branches at Scarborough, Deal, &c. The comings and goings of sea fish are somewhat uncertain, and one great object of the Society is to give information, and thus enable its members who are starting on a holiday sea-fishing trip to go to the right place. The Society also aims at having boats of its own, and obtaining special terms for its members among sea-fishermen, and at seaside hostelries; at forming bait depôts, and giving information on every possible point that may be required by the sea-angler.

The Society, of which Sir Edward Birkbeck, Bart., is the president, is as yet in its infancy, but it has done a very great deal towards attaining the objects of its existence. Already its members have the privilege of reduced fares on certain lines. Its offices are at 66 the Haymarket, London, and Mr. Blakey, the editor of the 'Angler,' is head of the North-country branch at Scarborough. The subscription is little more than nominal.

Leaving for the moment bass, mackerel and flat fish out of the question, the best sea-fishing is usually obtained in the months of September and October, when cod, whiting, and pollack are plentiful, feed well, and come inshore. I have a very happy recollection of days passed in Yorkshire, sometimes in a coble, sometimes on the reef of rocks known as Filey Brigg. From the boat we used to paternoster for codling; and as 'paternoster' is a term which does not explain itself, I may, perhaps, with advantage describe the construction of that most useful piece of tackle. Take 3 yds. of twisted gut, place a 2-oz. lead at the end of it, and have three lengths of short, stout gut projecting from it at intervals of 18 in. or more; on these short lengths tie three good-

sized hooks. If very large fish are expected, twisted gut must be used for the horizontal hook-lengths; but the main, perpendicular portion of the tackle should always be a little stronger than the hook-length, so that if a break takes place only a hook is lost.

There are several varieties of sea fish which at times take the artificial 'fly' right well. That they for a moment regard it as a winged insect is out of the question. The lure one uses is just as much or as little a fly as the arrangements of fur, feather, and tinsel which tempt to their death many lordly salmon.

From the fly-fisher's point of view, the king of British sea fish is the bass. He is sometimes found on the North-eastern and North-western coasts, and is fairly plentiful at times on the South-east coast; but those who would fish for him should rather visit milder portions of the country, such as Devonshire, Cornwall, and Wales. The bass is, generally speaking, more difficult to catch than the salmon, being extremely wary. He is somewhat nasty in his tastes, and when all other baits fail may occasionally be caught with a piece of dead fish which is strongly tainted.

Skate's liver, a most difficult bait to keep on the hook, he is particularly fond of; and tainted baits, in which may be included the entrails of chickens and rabbits, are especially effective in the neighbourhood of harbours frequented by fishing-boats, where a large

amount of none too fresh refuse is thrown into the sea. and acts as ground bait. If the sea is excessively clear—so often the case on the rocky coast of Devon and Cornwall after a long spell of fine weather-it seems almost impossible to catch bass, except at night. I was talking over this subject with a very successful bass-fisher in South Wales, who laid down so many conditions which ought to be satisfied before bass could be caught that, if his views had been absolutely correct, these fish would only find their way into the angler's creel about once in a blue moon. In the first place, said he, the water must be a little thickened by wind from the south-west. Then, it must be the period of spring tides; and, in addition, the tide must be rising, not falling, an hour before daybreak. Moreover, nothing could be caught unless it so chanced that the trawlers were bringing some skate, from which liver could be obtained for bait.

Of course these conditions were somewhat local; but, generally speaking, it may be said that the best bass-fishing is during the period of spring tides, when the water is a little coloured; and the angler should be on the warpath at daybreak.

Among the fish which take a fly are included every fish that feeds on the fry of the herring or sprat, and more particularly the mackerel, pollack, coalfish, and herring. In Ireland and Scotland, where the coast-line is indented with numerous inlets of the sea, the herrings sometimes swarm into these salt-water lochs in the autumn, and there are several instances of anglers having obtained really good sport by casting a white-winged fly, regarded by the fish which seize it as a small herring or sprat. A piece of fish-skin attached to the hook, and worked like a fly, often answers better than feathers and wool.

The first occasion upon which I set foot upon Filey Brigg I came upon a man seated upon a rock, with a little trout rod in his hand, looking despairingly at the sea. I asked him if he had enjoyed good sport, and he said, but rather dolefully, that while the sport was grand the enjoyment was rather doubtful. He had never fished in the sea before, but, finding that the trout on a certain moorland stream were not rising owing to the hot, dry summer, and having heard that fish were to be caught with a fly on the Brigg, he had simply brought down his light trout tackle, put on a slightly stouter cast and a grilse fly, and commenced whipping the German Ocean. Suddenly, to his amazement, a big fish seized his fly, and after a plunge or two swam straight out to sea. In an awe-struck voice he told me how it had gone on and on until all the line was off his reel, when it gave a savage tug, breaking the tackle, and going off with his fly, his gut cast, and 45 yards of line.

Congers attain the weight of 80 lb. or more, so,

where large ones may be expected, the tackle must be enormously strong. I saw two fishermen row into the harbour at Ilfracombe, having in their boat half an immense eel. After vainly trying to get the whole of him into the boat, one of the men had taken out his knife and sliced the fish in half, losing the tail portion. I can quite believe the story of the lost tail, for a 80-lb. or a 100-lb. conger would be a fair match for any two men. I remember a Welsh boy catching a 19-lb. conger among the rocks at low water by means of an iron hook. It was with the greatest difficulty that he secured it. The fish spun and twisted round, and caught him a blow in the face with its tail that nearly knocked him over.

On the whole, it may be said that the sport to be obtained in the sea is every bit as exciting as that afforded by our rivers and lakes. But it is most necessary to have local knowledge, the right bait, and to fish at the right season of the year, and when the tide suits.





### CHAPTER II

## PHOSPHORESCENT CONGERS

waters of Carmarthen Bay about the same hour. The moon was full, I had dined. She rose majestically out of the sea, so it

seemed. I, with my Welsh fisher-boy, rowed bravely but not majestically out of the harbour. Murder was in my heart, congers were in the sea, and a goodly number of quaint and somewhat unpleasant looking squid lay in the bottom of the boat. I am, perhaps, influenced to use the term relating to homicide by reason of a course of seaside circulating-library literature. All I really mean is, that I wanted to kill congers, and that want was so great as to be almost a necessity.

Somehow or other the feminine element in one's life does not altogether approve of sea or other fishing by night. Difficulties arise as to a latchkey. Weary anglers at 2 A.M. do not walk lightly, and, try

as they can to avoid it, awaken the household. Breakfast is late the next morning; and if, added to this, the night's endeavours have been fruitless, and the larder none the fuller, woe betide the unhappy man!

These remarks are not quite so irrelevant as they may seem. There had been one memorable night when, trusting to a friend, who assured me that at a certain rocky point near the harbour I should catch many, but small, eels, I attempted a preliminary conger canter. For some reason or other only big congers were feeding that night. Over the rocks they had to be held, and my tackle, intended for eels of moderate dimensions, snapped repeatedly like packthread. I came home fishless-eelless-thinking hard things of my friend. Subsequently strong tackle was made-conger lines which would lift a dead-weight of 80lb. without breaking—brave plaited snoods, soft, yielding, but mightily strong. I tried again, but happened on a night when not an eel, big or little, was feeding.

The moonlight night 'opening' (as sailors say when taking marks) this chapter was the third effort, and, as I have said, murder was in my heart. The moon was at its full—a more important incident in the night's proceedings than it may appear to be to those who go not down to the sea in boats after fish. To begin with, the night being almost cloudless and the water clear, we had not that degree of darkness which is advisable to hide the imposture when fishing

with coarse tackle. I could have read small print with ease. Also, the moon being full, it was a period of spring tides, and the rise was one of no less than twenty-three feet, accompanied by an equally low fall.

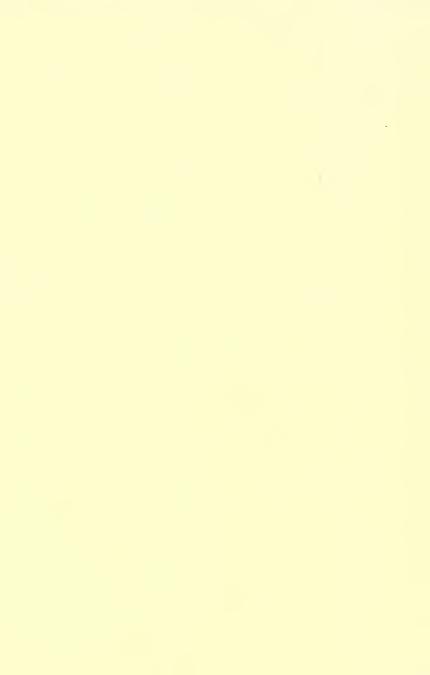
The bay was shallow and sandy, fringed by lime-stone cliffs, fragments of which projected fifty to a hundred yards to sea, affording in their nooks, cracks, and crevices lurking places or eligible residences, as you please to put it, for my victims. Less than a quarter of a mile from the harbour we moored between the moon and the cliffs, fifty yards from the latter and a few thousand miles from the former—precise data which I give as useful to fishermen coming after me.

But here in the illustration is the place itself seen in broad sunlight, with Llan in the foreground. Those are our cliffs in the middle distance, looking very different in the smiling noontide light to the romantic appearance they put on at night, their jagged edges lit up with moonlight, their hollows dark and mysterious.

A sharp dinner-knife, feloniously taken from the house, I found invaluable to divide each squid into halves; though I must admit that next morning the blade was somewhat rusty from the salt water, and the ivory handle a trifle stained with the little bag of Indian ink which the squid carries for the purposes of correspondence and darkening the waters when pursued by its enemies. Sea-fishermen insist



"THE PLACE ITSELF SEEN IN BROAD SUNLIGHT WITH LLAN IN THE FOREGROUND."



that the congers like a soft bait, that squid should be beaten to make it tender, and that bones should be taken out of mackerel and pilchard used on the hook. If the conger is so particular about bones, what does he say to the large hook which is offered to him enshrined in squid or other bait, and what does he do for a living when there is no fisherman at hand to bone his mackerel for him?

Such thoughts as these served to while away the first hour, during which the eels showed no inclination to feed. When no fish are being caught the angler generally points to some natural condition as the cause of his non-success. I pointed to the moon, and explained to Llan, my crew, who knew little or nothing about congers, that it was too light for us to hope to catch eels. Llan suggested that there were no eels there—a possibility which, having also occurred to me, induced me to shift the boat about a hundred yards nearer the harbour, and close to the peak of a huge mass of rock which was just projecting out of the sea. Here we fared better, and our fare deserves another paragraph.

Some five minutes after carefully lowering the grappling-iron I felt a delicate touch on my line—a wee shake.

'Llan,' I whispered, 'I've a bite, a big fish I'm certain; large congers always bite very delicately!'

The bite continued, and I struck and pulled up. There was no furious resistance, such as I had ex-

perienced on a previous evening-only a dull, dead weight, and not much of that. The water was not deep, and very soon I lifted a fine green crab into the boat. The moonlight was powerful enough to enable me to gather from his expression that Llan held me in less esteem than before the crab was boated. Twenty minutes went by, I had two of the strong conger lines out with large hooks, and a somewhat lighter line (eight-plait hemp), on which was a smallish hook baited with a particularly soft and nasty-looking piece of squid. This line was on a reel. Suddenly the reel slipped briskly along the seat where it was tranquilly lying, hit the gunwale, and in another second would have been overboard had I not caught it. Such a fish was there! I knew it was no eel. There was a dash and a rush like a 20-lb. fresh-run salmon, and the line was simply torn through my fingers. Then the fish was under the boat, then away almost round the rock. I held him a little hard, and up he came to the surface, lashing the water, and churning it up into silvery foam. It was a bass—a monster bass, the phantom after which I had journeyed into Wales, only to be told that there had been no bass-fishing for four years worth speaking about. I never felt more excited over a fish in my life. Llan knew nothing of gaffing, and made feeble efforts at this glorious creature, which still flurried in the water like a dying whale.

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Give it me!' I cried.

But it was too late. As I took the gaff with one hand the tension on the line ceased, and the fish was gone. The hook had come out of his mouth. It was a most bitter disappointment, for he was a bass among bass. If the line had only been on a rod, he might have been played and decently killed; but what are the use of 'ifs' after the event. We had no reason to expect bass at that place—in fact, none were supposed to be in the bay; and a fishing-rod is worse than useless with large conger cels over rocks.

The moon, out of sympathy, I believe, shone less brightly after this sad affair, hiding her sweet, comely face behind a delicate lace-like covering of misty clouds, and the congers, awakening to a sense of their position, began to feed. A three-pounder first seized my bait, and was quickly hauled up in the good old-fashioned willy-nilly style into the boat. Llan tried to take the hook out before killing him, and in less time than is required to describe it the eel, with diabolical ingenuity, completely wound itself up in the loose coils of the boy's line, which he had carelessly let lie at the bottom of the boat. A new patent 'priest' that I had with me soon settled the conger, and the line was disentangled in a few minutes.

Here let me be practical as well as descriptive. Never, when an eel is pulled up, hold it, or any part of it, in the air, or lift its head off the ground by means of the line. Let it squirm on the ground or floor of the boat, as the case may be, give it a sharp blow about a third of the way from the tail, and when that useful member is paralysed, turn your attention to the eel's head. Then, and not till then, you may lift him up and disgorge the hook. Another plan is to stab the eel behind the head, when, ten to one but he winds his body round the arm belonging to the hand which holds him.

Now that it was not quite so light we were able to see the glories of the phosphorescence which was on and in the water. Each eel came up a wriggling line of silver, the water broke in silvery waves as we cast in our baited lines, the lines themselves went down as silvery pencils of light to the bottom. When a big eel—one that had to be dealt gently with—took the bait, what a glorious sight it was as he writhed, twisted, and fought in a bath of liquid silver, and finally came into the boat with points of silvery light on him, which died away almost instantly!

We stayed here until we found ourselves almost grounded on a rock, over which, when the water was high, we had floated in blissful ignorance. Then, about midnight, we shifted to a little sandy patch between two small reefs, a reputed conger ground. We found that the water was only four feet deep, and it seemed to me almost silly to fish for such shy things as congers in water so shallow. I began by casting out my bait some distance from the boat, leaving it for ten minutes or so, and then drawing it in a few yards, and waiting another ten minutes.

Meanwhile Llan, who was half-asleep, dangled his lump of squid over the side, having out little more than a vard of line. Suddenly he woke up with a start, and hauled in a five-pounder. This caused me, not having had a bite, to work my bait up close to the boat; and, oddly enough, no sooner was it under the shadow of our little craft than a big conger, without hesitation or by-play, seized it, and went off, or tried to go off, with it. I held him—we being near rocks brought him to the top, saw him roll over in the silvery water, and gathered some idea of his size, and had the dissatisfaction of seeing him sink out of sight. The hook had lost its hold. 'Twas ever thus: the biggest, wisest, and most valued fish are those which are lost. Nevertheless, we had no reason to complain, having made a take of conger somewhat above the average.

About two o'clock in the morning we rowed back as near to the harbour as the very low state of the tide would allow, left the boat on the sand, and ascended the picturesque little road up the side of the cliff to our respective houses. And here a confession. The glorious night, soft, balmy, and silvery, and the fight with the bass, had determined me to go to a certain famous rocky point (where four years ago bass used to be caught), and, properly equipped with rod and running tackle, make one determined attempt to retrieve my bad fortune with the king of sea fishes. At, and not until, half-past three I ought to be on

the rock. I should then get an hour and a half's fishing before the rising tide would drive me away. I looked out my bass rod and tackle with care, selected some choice squid, then lay down for one short hour on the sofa—one short hour.

I awoke at five, intensely disgusted to find I had overslept myself, and that the water was too high for the bass rock. There was nothing else to do but to tumble up to bed, noisily, being half-asleep and weary, and waking everybody in the house. Needless to say, no one except Llan believes that I hooked a monster bass, and four large eels which I gave to the lad had to be produced before even they were credited to our joint endeavours.





# CHAPTER III

### TROUT-FISHING IN THE SEA

FTER a long drought, how gratefully we receive the first shower. I had been passing some weeks in the Highlands, near an arm of the sea, with sea-trout

lakes all around, which, owing to the dry weather, contained no fish. Brown-trout-fishing, therefore, was all the sport to be obtained, and even that was not always up to the mark. The heather was turning brown with the intense heat, tarns were getting gradually covered with a green scum, and what were in ordinary seasons sparkling, dashing, little trout streams were now dry dusty lines of granite boulders. Every day, when the tide was making, one could see salmon leaping in the sea loch, where large numbers of fish had collected, waiting for a rise of water in the river to commence the first stage of their journey to the spawning-grounds. How we longed for a 'saft' day.

By an unusual piece of good luck wet weather set in before the end of my holiday, and I had some very fair sport in consequence. I well recollect how gleefully we saw the clouds gathering round the mountain-tops one evening, and the soft feeling in the air, and the sweet smell rising from refreshed heather, as a series of gentle showers fell on it the following morning. So far there was no increase of water in the rivers, so, instead of toiling up to a distant loch, as we had intended, we decided to devote a morning to spinning in the sea loch, one especial reason for this being the existence of a tradition that at some remote period of history a salmon was caught there on a spinning bait.

As the gillie rowed us slowly from the shore my friend put up a small phantom minnow, while I—experimentally—fastened a 'Halcyon' to the end of a light spinning trace, sand-eels, the best bait of all, not being obtainable. Tackle fixed, I took one oar, laid the rod between my knees, and, with the gillie, pulled the boat across the mouth of the river, where the salmon were leaping wildly, dancing with delight, perhaps, at the prospect of the approaching change to fresh water. With regard to the salmon, I may say at once that we caught none, but were more fortunate with the sea trout.

Salmon have been caught by fair angling in salt water, particularly in Loch Roag, Isle of Lewis; and it is a little surprising that more are not taken

under similar circumstances. Perhaps the solution of the problem is that the number of persons who attempt to take salmon in the sea are very few. Bearing in mind that the salmon's great feedingground is the sea, and that in fresh water he eats but little—nothing at all, say some authorities, with whom I do not agree—it might very reasonably be supposed that more fish would be caught by the angler in salt water than in fresh. The general rule, undoubtedly, is that where fish feed most, there they are most easily caught. There is a good deal of difference, however, between the narrow estuary, where the salmon waits for the spate which will allow him to enter the river, and the open sea, where he roams about, probably thinking of little else than breakfast, dinner, and supper, and little snacks between-times. In the former locality he no doubt feeds less than in the latter, yet it is in the estuary that he is most fished for. I fear, however, that salmon are too scattered in the open sea to ever afford much sport. In the estuaries where these fish collect, the angler's chances of sport are greater. Clearly, what we want is an estuary collection coupled with an open sea appetite.

In the first number of the defunct fish-culture journal, edited by Mr. Willis Bund, was a very interesting paper on the food of the salmon, by Mr. Anderson Smith, from which it appeared that in the open sea salmon feed principally on herrings; but,

as Mr. Anderson Smith remarks, it is certain that a voracious fish will not confine itself to any single species of food, and there can hardly be a doubt that the salmon will take the young of most fish. A gentleman assured Mr. Smith that he had taken a 3-lb. grilse with a minnow when trolling for lythe (Anglice, pollack). Sea-fishing on even moderately fine tackle, and with spinning baits, has been little practised around these coasts—the Scottish and Irish—most frequented by salmon, or we should, no doubt, have on record more instances of salmon being taken in the open sea. The subject is a very interesting one, and I cannot help expressing a hope that some of those fortunate persons who are in a position to experiment on salmon-fishing in salt water will take advantage of their opportunities, and let us know the results. Mr. Anderson Smith, in the paper to which I have referred, states that the Maclaine of Loch Buie informed him 'that at one time, off Colonsay, he came upon large fish leaping out of the water in their eagerness to seize their prey, and these were found to be salmon chasing herring.' What an opportunity this was to try the attractions of a spinning bait on salmon in the sea. I recollect being told on one of my angling excursions, but cannot call to mind who was my informant, that in the lower tidal reaches of the Shannon salmon were caught on tackle similar to that used in live baiting with a float for jack, the bait being a large dead herring. No rod was used, and the arrangement was, in fact, something in the nature of a spiller or trimmer.

Though we took no salmon, our endeavours to attract that most lordly of fish led to our discovering that the sea trout, when in salt water, is occasionally by no means particular in his choice of baits. I had put up, as I have said, a Halcyon spinner, which, for the benefit of those who are unacquainted with it, I may explain to be a bunch of peacock herle combined with red and yellow feathers, which, having two fans at its head, spins brilliantly. It is similar to the Derby killer, and is certainly a killing bait, but on rivers has the objectionable peculiarity of pricking a large majority of the fish which run at it.

We had not made one turn across the mouth of the river before a small sea trout took my lure, but, after a leap or two, went off, with, no doubt, a supreme disgust of Halcyon baits. After pricking another fish I changed my bait for a small Devon minnow of unusual attractiveness, being covered as to its back with transparent golden-brown paint, through which shone the silver of the metal. In the meantime the gillie landed for my companion a trout of about 1 lb. My first fish, taken on the Devon bait, was a cuddy, or youthful coalfish.

Finding the salmon would not look at our baits near the mouth of the river, we rowed lower down the sea loch to a spot where we had seen a salmon or two leaping. On the way two more sea trout were assisted into the boat by means of the landing-net, my friend's phantom, and my little golden-brown Devon. The salmon on our new fishing-ground were no more amenable to reason than those at the mouth of the river. After giving the Devon bait and small phantom a trial, I put up a large red phantom, while, to the best of my recollection, my friend tried a large gold and silver clipper bait. To our surprise, both baits were taken by sea trout. The sea loch was long, narrow, and at the sides hills rose abruptly from the water's edge; thus the water was deep up to the very edge of the land, and, thinking it possible that there might be salmon feeding on the bottom at the foot of the rocks, I changed my light trace for one of gimp heavily leaded, and directed the gillie to row steadily along the shore. My bait was the red phantom, and I had some hopes of catching a few pollack; but I learnt afterwards that these fish are not much taken in the loch until the arrival of the herrings.

The red phantom being no use on the heavily-leaded tackle, I exchanged it for the small cuddy, which I had taken earlier in the day, rigged up on a Chapman spinner—that most useful of spinning flights. Neither salmon nor pollack took it, but a sea trout of about three-quarters of a pound did; which somewhat astonished me, as the tackle was particularly coarse, and the bait considerably larger than I generally use for jack. I need not further follow the

events of that morning's fishing. We fished for salmon, and as a result had twelve sea trout, averaging about one pound each, caught on the Halcyon bait, Devon baits, large red phantom, small brown phantom, Clipper, and a small coalfish. But, after all, is not the charm of angling its uncertainty?

It is not generally known that sea trout, and occasionally salmon, are taken by the angler in salt water. In the far North they are regularly fished for, both with worm and fly, in the sea; and in this connection I may quote here from a letter which Mr. Moodie-Heddle, who lives in the Orkneys, sent me on the subject. He is only known to me as a reader of my book on sea-fishing, and sends me this most interesting communication with that friendliness so characteristic of anglers. The letter contains some very original and practical remarks on a little-understood branch of sea-fishing, so I am very glad to have permission to make it public. Those who are not anglers may now skip with advantage.

In Orkney, says Mr. Moodie-Heddle, the sea trout rarely take well when fished for from a boat, being too shy and the water too clear. Both in the sea and in the salt-water lochs the anglers who do best wade. The chief bait is an ordinary earthworm. If no scoured worms are to be obtained, and fresh ones have to be dug, they may be toughened by being placed in lukewarm water for from twelve to twenty minutes. The water should not be hot enough to kill

them. The worm bait is worked with a sinking and drawing motion, never coming quite to the surface of the water, nor quite touching the bottom. The best depths of water for this style of fishing run from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft. to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ft.

The largest sea trout, which are usually found on the edge of a tideway and near rocks where there is a growth of seaweed, are often shy both of worm and fly, and are best taken with a soleskin sand-eel. My correspondent, however, objects to a spinner, on the ground that fish are more often pricked than hooked with a spinning bait. He finds the trout usually take the soleskin bait sideways or crossways, and then try to run to shelter with it. His favourite bait, which, from a sketch and the description, I take to be an artificial sand-eel—and a very good one too—is made as follows:

'Get a piece of copper bell-wire, or brass-coated picture-wire,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  in. to 3 in. long. Tie a hook (Sproat No. 12 or 13) firmly to one end. Slip the other end through a piece of greyish white rubber tubing, such as is used for feeding-bottles, which can be bought cheaply by the yard. The tail end should be cut sloping, and sliced at side of tail, so as to make it vibrate. The end of wire coming out at mouth should have an eye turned over a small brass or silvered swivel. The back should be coloured with two coats of Stephens's blue-black ink, the first coat being brought a third of the way down the side also.

Then varnish the inked parts, which makes it olivegreen. The belly can have a line of silver paint or strip of foil. The side left white; and if it gets discoloured, scraping it with a penknife will freshen it up. Two pink beads, with a black circle (on the indiarubber?) inked, for eyes, and the neck tied in with greenish silk. The one hook is best in clear water and near weeds, as, though an occasional fish may miss, you will hardly get a rise with more complicated tackle.' Mr. Moodie-Heddle, wading in about 2 feet of water, and casting this bait from the beach, with a 16-ft. rod, caught five sea trout in a summer day, when the fly was useless. The fish went from  $1\frac{3}{4}$  lb. to  $3\frac{3}{4}$  lb., and were caught in about 4 feet of very clear water, where weeds were plentiful, tide absent, wind slight, and the day sunny.

The large fish take the soleskin bait already mentioned, not spun, but sailed or drifted in the tideway—an operation which requires a peculiar knack and some judgment. With one of these baits Mr. Moodie-Heddle was fortunate enough to catch two fine sea trout, weighing between 9 lb. and 10 lb. each. They were taken within 6 feet of the beach, in not over 15 or 16 inches of water. Such fish rarely rise to the fly on our coasts.

With regard to fly-fishing in the sea for sea trout, Mr. Moodie-Heddle says the only killing fly in Orkney is one dressed with a fiery brown cock's hackle, tied palmer fashion, to imitate the sand-

hopper, either with or without wings of speckled grey feather of some kind. Even this fly only takes in some places, and occasionally. The gaudy sea-trout flies used further south Mr. Moodie-Heddle has found to be useless. Many people declare, he says, that they catch numbers of sea trout with the fly; but in Orkney he has never seen it done while he was present, and he suspects the fish would say the same. He has often, when fishing near the mouths of streams, killed numbers of sea trout in breezy weather with a common mouse-tail, which is baited in the following manner:—The gut on a common bait-hook is softened and threaded on a needle, which is entered \( \frac{3}{4} \) in. from the point of tail, and brought out at the thick end. The bend of the hook is then pulled up to the point of entry, the thick part of tail firmly bound round with crimson silk, and the bait is ready for casting. Possibly the trout take this bait for an elver, i.e. small fresh-water eel.

Mr. Moodie-Heddle gives some instances of salmon taking a bait in salt water and smolts taking the artificial fly. 'I was interested,' he writes, 'in your remarks about trying for salmon in the sea. There is, I believe, an old instance of one being caught on a herring at Menai Straits, and in fresh water I have in former years caught them in Scotland on large garvies, or sprats, spinning. I suspect the difficulty is they usually keep to the deep sea, save when anxious to enter a stream, and then do not settle

to feed till they get into fresh water. They do not seem to care for lying close to the beach, like the sea trout, perhaps not having acquired the instinct of concealing themselves in the weed. I once caught a salmon of  $14\frac{1}{2}$  lb. in the sea on worm, and know of another instance; and I have killed one of  $8\frac{3}{4}$  lb. in brackish water at mouth of a stream, also on worm. You are aware, I suppose, that salmon in Vancouver take spoon bait, and even the fly, in the sea. I have known smolts of half to three-quarters of a pound taken once or twice on small white fly when fishing for cuddies.'





# CHAPTER IV

# 'LONGSIDE THE TANGLES

HE waves, driven by half a gale from the N.E., had been pounding on Filey Brigg for three days, rendering fishing from the side of that curious reef of rocks most

frequented by fish, or from boats outside the bay, quite impossible. For a week or more previous to the commencement of the gale the only really good fishing had been obtained either on the 'backside o' Brigg'—to use the local phrase, meaning the north and exposed side—or from boats at 'Brigg End.' The grey gurnards, whiting, and flat fish had seemingly disappeared from the bay with the approach of cold weather (we were in the first days of November), and there had been, so far, no signs of the cod and codlings, which in autumn come inshore and make a capital substitute. Altogether, the angling outlook was very gloomy, and of a nature to sour the sweetest temper.

On the fourth day the gale abated and the wind chopped suddenly round to the south; but the sea still ran too high to allow fishing outside the shelter of the Brigg. While endeavouring, by means of my binoculars, to make out the species of a flock of seabirds that morning, two black balls, some fifty yards apart, connected by a line of corks, came across the field of the glasses, and revealed the fact that the fishermen suspected the presence of herrings in the bay, for the black balls were the tarred bladders which are placed at the end of herring nets. Now, when herrings come inshore in the autumn, the fish which feed on them usually follow, and a golden opportunity is afforded the angler who loves to pursue his favourite sport with rod and line in fairly shallow water.

The discovery of the herring nets was cheering, and a few minutes later I was at the coble-landing taking counsel of my particular fisherman—a weather-beaten old fellow named Robinson—as to the probabilities of sport. Yes, there were a few herrings in the bay, but with North-country caution he would not commit himself to any more definite statement than that we might get a 'billet or two, and, maybe, a codling, inside o' Spittals, 'bout two o'clock.'

As we rowed across the bay that afternoon in Robinson's little coble, I learned the story of the Filey Breakwater Company, and by the time I had acquired the points of the case we were almost over Spittals. Our indignation on the subject, however,

rapidly evaporated after the killick stone was thrown overboard—the bottom being too foul for an anchor—and the coble had turned head to wind.

'Where are we?' I asked.

Inside Spittals, 'longside the tangles,' answered Robinson.

Now, the shape of Spittals favours the supposition that it was made by the hand of man. It is of even width, flat on the top, and the side we fished goes down straight to the bottom like a wall of masonry. The fish lie close to the base of this—may I say submarine wall?—and that it is not altogether an easy matter to get the boat exactly on the right spot need hardly be pointed out.

It so happened that on this particular afternoon the stern of the coble lay just over Spittals, while her bows were beyond the edge; thus, while I, who was sitting in the stern, had my tackle among the tangles, Robinson, who was working a hand line, was in considerably deeper water, on a clear bottom. I did not realise this for a few minutes, and when I declared we were not rightly placed, the fisherman, who judged the matter by his own line, assured me we were off Spittals, and not among the tangles—those long, flat seawceds which grow from a short, round stem, and, with the stem, are not unlike cat-o'-nine-tails. We were sheltered from the swell by the Brigg, on the north side of which great breakers were thundering.

But to return to our fishing. We were baiting with mussels, brought all the way from Hamburg, if you please. Very fine and large these same mussels are; but the fact that Yorkshire fishermen should be obliged to obtain bait 'made in Germany' is somewhat humiliating, and speaks badly for British enterprise. There is no lack of estuaries on our coasts in which mussels might be cultivated, probably to the benefit of all parties concerned.

Old Robinson, having baited many miles of long lines, was a great adept at putting on mussels; one twist, and the hook was baited, and well baited, too. I was fishing with a tackle I have often found useful when fish may be looked for both near the bottom and higher up. At the end of the undressed, twisted-silk Nottingham pike-line was a yard of salmon gut, terminated with an eyed hook. On the silk line, and stopped by the knot joining it to the gut, was a I-oz. pipe lead, and a foot above the lead a second hook, fastened to the line by a few inches of gut.

Almost before I had felt bottom and reeled up to bring the tackle to its proper position a dull, dead strain on the rod-top gave information that a hungry codling had assaulted my bait with open mouth and got hooked. After about three minutes' of heavy play he suddenly gave in, came up to the surface, and was introduced to the landing-net. A nice plump little fish of 8 lb. he was, with the dimple at the back of his neck well developed, which showed his condition.

Robinson had the fish off the hook and a mussel on in less time than it takes to write about it; and again, almost before the bait could have reached the bottom, it was seized, and exactly the same process was repeated.

My companion now began to show some interest in the proceedings, and had a look at his baits, or rather hooks, for both were bare. Next a small billet (coalfish) was hauled in unceremoniously on the hand line, and every few minutes a codling would fall to my share. At the end of about a quarter of an hour I found myself obliged to give line to an unusually heavy fish, which ran round one of those thick, round stems of seaweed already described. Fortunately, the tackle gave way close to the hook, but (what a blessing eyed hooks are!) damages were repaired in a minute or two. While I was tying on the hook the fisherman lectured me for fishing with weak tackle; and for an answer, as soon as I was ready, I caught my hook in one of his, attached to a stout horsehair snood, with the result that, on pulling our respective snoods, his broke, and so proved the salmon gut to be the stronger.

North-countrymen are not slow to appreciate good things, and before I left Filey, Robinson was talking of the fine whiting lines he would make in the winter—'if spared'—with a hank of waste salmon gut I had given him. Stout single gut is, I find, strong enough for cod up to 12 lb. in shallow water;

but for larger fish than this, if the bottom is foul, the gut should be twisted.

Seeing at last that I really was fishing over the tangles, and having a fisherman's objection to losing gear, my companion hauled in a few yards of the mooring rope, which caused us to come over water just double the depth of that in which I had been fishing. The result of the move was peculiar. My first fish was a small codling of a brilliant crimson colour, which the fisherman contemptuously designated a 'Jerusalem cuckoo'; but after that no other members of the cod family did we catch. Some ten minutes passed without a bite, during which Robinson told a strange tale, how on a winter's night a Spanish ship had gone to pieces on the Brigg, and all hands were drowned save one. He, poor ignorant fellow-ignorant, at any rate, of the way we English treat shipwrecked sailors—fled into the sea when he saw some fishermen approach, and stood almost to his neck in water, calling out piteously in some foreign tongue, and evidently in fear of his rescuers.

As Robinson finished his yarn a savage tug came at the top of my rod. I struck, and with a whirr some twenty yards of line went straight off the reel. No codling that! After a while the fish allowed himself to be coaxed near to the boat, and proved to be, as I expected, a coalfish of nearly 4 lb. No sooner was the line rebaited and in the water than another fish had the bait, and for more than

half an hour this new phase of our sport continued. Every now and again two fish would be hooked at once, which gave heavy work for my bamboo pike rod. During the short intervals of rest I gave the fisherman (as while playing a fish) he would often manage to let down his hand line and pull up a fish or two. In size—they were all billet—they went from 2 lb. to 4 lb., and all played splendidly, very much in the manner of trout.

At four o'clock the tide began to ebb, and the fish instantly left off biting. By half-past four we had landed—stern foremost, as is the way with cobles—on the sand opposite the coble-landing. Our take consisted of about four dozen fish, three-fourths of which were coalfish, and weighed rather over than under  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. For the remainder of the week the sport continued good, the codling and billet being unusually plentiful in the bay, and almost always to be found 'inside Spittals, 'longside the tangles.'





# CHAPTER V

#### OFF SUTHERLANDSHIRE

N the northern portion of the west coast of Scotland is a picturesque little fishingvillage which boasts a comfortable and simple inn differing in many respects

from the majority of Highland houses of entertainment. Though the trouting in the neighbourhood is of a poor description, M. and myself, when on a fishing expedition in the North some years ago, determined to spend three quiet days in this elysium to recruit exhausted nature before returning to England. Of the 'bonnie Scotland' we had read and heard so much we had previously seen little or nothing, having passed all our time in a rather desolate portion of Sutherland, where, however, good fishing had made up for lack of beautiful surroundings. But at Aultnahanda—so let me call it—where we arrived early one sunny morning, we saw how truly 'bonnie' is Scotland.

The little village lay in the arena of a huge natural amphitheatre formed by the surrounding hills. Standing among the whitewashed cottages and blooming gardens, a stranger might think himself miles from the sea, but the nets hung out to dry and the faint smell of seaweed would tell their tale. Aultnahanda is an oasis in a desert. Trees and plants grow in this verdant valley, and flowers bloom. It is probably the warmest spot in the western portion of Sutherland, and the contrast to the bleak country all around makes it appear very beautiful. We soon discovered the inn, which was perched on a grassy hill overlooking the sea, and at the end of a lovely bay almost entirely shut in by jagged rocks of fantastic shapes. On the right of the bay were high hills, on the left a long stretch of bright, glistening sand, and beyond this, almost on the seashore, a little weather-beaten graveyard, the last resting-place of many hardy fishermen, descendants mostly of the clan MacKay. Through the narrow opening we could look out on to the mighty Atlantic, then tinted with those gorgeous colours made familiar to us by Mr. Brett's Cornish seascapes. The horizon was one dark, deep, intense blue, paling as it came nearer By the rocks the water seemed of the deepest purple, while in the bay, over the sand, it was a delicate green.

We had declared we would not fish at Aultnahanda, and on the day of our arrival thoroughly enjoyed a roam along the coast and the view over an adjoining bay studded with picturesque islands. Yet somehow that same evening M. and I found ourselves talking matters piscatorial with an ancient mariner (of rude and incomprehensible speech), whose boat and services we chartered.

The next day, as so often happens on new waters, we wasted our opportunities—that is, from an angler's point of view-for we did little else but cruise about between a large island and the shore, now and again endeavouring to shoot wily cormorants, whose heads were under water long before the shot reached them. But we did have the lines overboard for a couple of hours, and caught two lythe (Anglice, pollack), of 3 lb. and 5 lb. respectively. The threepounder was hooked on a very small comet bait, the larger on a cuddy (youthful coalfish), rigged up on a Chapman spinner. Old Norman McLeod, the aforesaid ancient mariner, finding we were really in earnest about catching some fish, confessed, after a while, that there were 'no much lythe in the sound,' and that we would do well on the following day to go lower down the coast, to the bay which we had viewed from the hill the previous evening. I improved on this by suggesting that we should at once set sail, and, after a little demur on the part of our skipper, we went about, and steered south. It was a glorious two hours' run down the coast over the blue sea—there is some meaning in the term 'blue sea'

when applied to the Atlantic. We threaded our way among rocks and by heather-crowned islands, finally reaching our destination about five o'clock. We then fished for an hour; but the tide was ebbing, and so we met with no success. Leaving our boat in the charge of the men at a salmon-station—i.e. a warehouse where the salmon caught in the nets are stored in ice to await the arrival of the smack—we walked home, a distance of two or three miles.

We were up and away betimes the next morning, McLeod starting before us. On arriving at the bay we discovered him vainly trying to catch some baits, searching under rocks that lay in the bed of a tiny stream which, coming down from the hills, trickled to the sea through the seaweed and stones. The baits sought for were young conger eels about 5 in. or 6 in. long, and swordick, or butterfish (Centronotus gunnellus), something like small fresh-water eels, light brown in colour, with dark spots. Until our arrival McLeod had succeeded but badly, for the slippery fish were too quick for him, and glided through his stiff and bony fingers. To save time M. and I set to work, and soon caught nine or ten of the little 'beasties,' which, in default of a more suitable depository, the ancient mariner stowed in his breeches pockets. It was then nearly low water, and by the time we were on board the tide had commenced to flow.

It is a theory of mine, possibly a foolish one, that

we should always, even in the sea, fish as fine as circumstances will allow; but I had to modify my tackle that morning. Both M. and I were using rods and ordinary spinning tackle, the only difference being that my trace was of single salmon gut, while M.'s was twisted. I had not previously caught a pollack over 5 lb. in weight, and had no idea what the larger fish were capable of. For the first half-hour, while we were clearing the bay, nothing happened worth recording, and we were beginning to think the fish were not 'on,' when, rounding a rocky point, something seized my bait (the comet), and down went my rod into the water.

The run of large pollack—or lythe, to give them their Scotch name—is the most sudden thing of the kind I know. A salmon often makes a grand dash, with a leap or two thrown in; but you can give him line—you usually have a fraction of a second to make the necessary arrangements. But these pollack—down they go, straight to the bottom, like a flash of lightning, and so suddenly that more often than not the top of the rod is pulled under the water.

I simply could not hold this fish. He was in the rocks in a second, and McLeod's face lengthened. He also said something which I cannot repeat—not that it was, to my knowledge, unparliamentary, but, unfortunately, only about one word out of every twenty he uttered could we understand. The first

day we made out next to nothing he said; the second day a few words only; but on the third, with the addition of signs, we got on very well together. As a matter of fact, the old fellow knew very little English, though he could, no doubt, be sufficiently loquacious when he liked—in Gaelic.

But to return to the fish, which, all this time and longer, was sulking amid rocks and seaweeds. I pulled and tugged; it was no use, the lythe was immovable. Finally, the gut cut on the edge of a rock. Sadder and wiser, I put up a stout gimp trace, and baited a large single hook with a little conger. The method of baiting is simple. Put the point of the hook in at the mouth of the eel, which thread a short way up the line, as if it were a lobworm, bringing the point of the hook out a couple of inches below the gills. A piece of waxed twine should then be tied tightly round the nose of the eel to keep it from slipping, and the bait is ready. One eel used thus will almost last out a day's fishing, it is so tough; and, next to the sand eel, I look upon it as the best natural bait. Of course, the eel should be killed before being put on the hook. A small lip hook has been recommended to keep the eel up the line in lieu of the thread, but with this arrangement the lips of the bait are usually torn with each run from the pollack, and so the eels do not last so long as when tied in the way I have described.

Up to this time M. had been fishing with a large

bright clipper bait, which had so far proved of no use, so he changed it for an aged and ragged red phantom (an excellent bait for lythe), which had done good service on Loch Derg three years before, and was destined to catch a fish or two yet; indeed, it caught the first fish of the day—a lythe of about 4 lb., which gave some capital sport. Soon afterwards my bait was seized, and for the second time down went about half of my rod into the water. But I was not going to let that fish get the better of me. I knew my tackle was sound and strong, and determined that everything should smash rather than the fish should obtain a foothold—no, a finhold—in the seaweed and rocks. I never before realised what a powerful lever is a fishing rod. A man can lift half a hundredweight at the end of a line, when at the end of a rod he cannot lift five pounds. It is not quite correct to talk about the power a rod gives an angler over the fish-it gives him command, not power; for by means of a long rod the angler can follow the fish more quickly, and keep a tight line on him.

Well, this fish quickly showed me that the power was on his side. After nearly pulling my arms out of their sockets, I felt him yielding just a little, then a little more, and so on. When a few yards only from the boat, splash! Down he was again—straight down. But I held on, and my tackle stood a greater strain than I had ever before put on gimp, and after one more dive—I can't call it a run—for the bottom,

friend pollack turned over on his side and M. gaffed him for me. He weighed 7 lb. I thought I had really caught a monster, for my English experiences of pollack were captures principally of fish weighing 2 lb. to 3 lb. Ten minutes later the red phantom accounted for an eight-pounder. What splendid sport he gave! Soon after this there came a lull, and, it being about two o'clock, old Norman poled the boat between islands through a narrow channel which led into a lovely marine pond, on the other side of which was a good landing-place.

These islands of the western coast of Scotland are things of beauty and joys for ever. They are formed of huge masses of rock, on the summits of which grow grass and heather, while on the sides are patches of gorgeous-hued lichens and fungi. Climbing up to the top of the island, we gazed upon what both M. and I declared to be the finest piece of coast scenery we had ever seen. At our feet lay the tiny salt-water lake, in which the sun, shining on the crystal-clear water, discovered all the beauties of a marine garden decked with seaweeds of delicate shades and colours. Beyond lay a small rocky island, and then the eye passed over a mile and a half stretch of water, of colours glorious beyond description, finally resting on the rock-bound shore opposite, behind which rose lofty mountains, Ben Ouinag towering above them all. There is not a grander mountain in all Sutherland than Quinag seen from the sea.

After lunch we again fished. I fear I should be deemed wearisome, and should certainly drag this sketch out to an inordinate length, were I to attempt to describe in detail the sport we had. Among other fish caught was a ten-pounder. On the turn of the tide and the commencement of the ebb, sport altogether ceased; so, hoisting our big lug sail, we started for a long beat home. But, the wind failing, we made instead for the salmon warehouse. As we entered the more inclosed portions of the bay or loch, we found ourselves amid a shoal of five porpoises, which kept us company for some distance. The seagulls seemed now to have scented the fish in our boat, for they surrounded us-kittiwakes, lesser blackbacks, and herring gulls-screaming above us, now and again swooping down, and almost hitting the sail with their wings. Possibly they took us for a herring boat homeward bound, and looked for the odd fish which always find their way overboard. Perched here and there along the rocks, I noted some half dozen herons, and from a little island we put up a flock of curlew. Divers of divers kinds were scattered about the loch, and the large number of sea birds so near the shore, not forgetting the porpoises, made it very clear that the time had about arrived for the small-boat men, of whom McLeod was one, to shoot their herring nets in the lochs and inlets of the sea.

At the salmon store we weighed our fish, and

found that our bag consisted of nine pollack, weighing a little over half a hundred-weight. The largest fish was the 10-pounder, which was followed by one of 8 lb. and two of about 7 lb. each.

M.'s tackle had unfortunately proved insufficiently strong for the larger lythe, and many fish broke his line and were lost to us. Bearing in mind that we came to Aultnahanda for 'three quiet days' without any expectation of fishing, we were well pleased with the result of our first engagement with the lythe of the north-west coast.





### CHAPTER VI

#### FLY-FISHING FROM THE ROCKS

URING the summer and early autumn months, shoals of coalfish come close to the rocky coast of Yorkshire, and elsewhere in the north, to feed on the herring

fry or *sile*, as it is termed by the fishermen. This gives the fly-fisher an opportunity of enjoying his favourite sport in salt water, for, while chasing the baby herrings near the surface, the billet—as coalfish of moderate dimensions are spoken of in Yorkshire—may frequently be beguiled into taking a fly; one with a silver body and a white wing, with tail, legs, and underwing of peacock harl being the best. The fly is doubtless looked upon by the fish as a juvenile herring, for, when not feeding on the sile, other baits—notably the india-rubber eels—are more killing. At times sport with the fly is very good indeed. Everything seems to depend on the sile; but though 'no sile no billet' is a fairly accurate statement, it unfor-

tunately by no means follows that the presence of sile necessarily indicates the presence of billet.

One morning, having armed myself with a 16 ft. grilse rod, a large wooden reel bearing eighty yards of eight-plait tanned hemp line, and a stout gut east, to the end of which was attached one of these sile flies, I made my way along a huge reef of rocks running out a quarter of a mile or more into the German Ocean. The rocks were of a curious formation, presenting to the north a series of immense steps or ledges, which sloped away to the south and gradually lost their form in a confused mass of irregularly shaped boulders, many of them as large as a small cottage. On the north side I looked for the fish, but looked for some time in vain; so sat me down on a rock and smoked with the patience becoming an angler.

It was an impressive scene. Beneath were the massive ledges which for thousands of years had borne the brunt of furious seas driven by howling winds winging their way unchecked from arctic regions. The great sea, solemn and mournful, now almost at rest, stretched far into the hazy distance, while the sun setting over the land caused the cliffs to stand out dark and terrible. Here and there caves showed out blackly, and 1 could just make out the path, far above high-water mark, from which, during a northerly gale, when the tide was at its lowest, a great wave had washed two unfortunate persons into

the raging waters at the foot of the cliff. On a marble tablet let into the rock their sad story is told and a warning given to all men passing that way. No sea birds were visible, no living thing was in sight, no sound was to be heard but the splash of the water on the rocks; and sitting there, far out in the sea, with night coming on, and the story of those two poor people running through my head, a sort of uncanny feeling began to possess me.

But what a trifle will change one's humours! The ledge beneath sloped upwards to its edge, but lengthways it fell away gradually to the sea, which covered the inner portion of it, and so formed a small lagoon. Along the margin of this little lake I noted a ruffling of the water, as if coarse sand was being let fall into it, then came a slight splash, and half a dozen little bits of silver leapt right out of the water on to the rocks; not long to remain there, however for three leaps and most of them were back again in the water. The bits of silver were sile, and the splash was caused by a feeding billet.

All uncanny thoughts fled; and in a very few seconds I was on a rock whence I could cast over the lagoon. Within certainly not more than three minutes from the time the sile appeared, a fish was making the rod bend, and me to wish myself on some safer ground than a round-topped rock covered with seaweed, at the foot of which was six feet or more of water. Strong fellows are those billet, and though

their staying powers are not great, the fight they make for the first three minutes is redoubtable. had no net, and this fish was a little too small to gaff and a trifle too large to lift out of the water, while any attempt to land it with the hand would assuredly have conducted the experimenter straightway into salt water. However, after two misses the gaff took hold, and billet the first reposed in my bag. Then the fish seemed to become a little shy, for though they were still feeding on the herring fry, breaking the surface just like small trout seizing Mayflies, the most they would do was to follow my fly, and then turn tail and go down with a swirl. But among the shoal were a few fish less wise or more greedy than the rest, and one of these every now and again would seize my fly, and after fighting bravely was entombed in the bag. As it grew darker, the fish lost their caution, and each cast resulted in a rise, with or without a billet to follow. By-and-by the rising tide dislodged me from my rock, and every quarter of an hour or so a retreat had to be made farther and farther from the spot where the first billet was hooked But the fish shifted their position too, and kept within casting distance.

Billet seemed to me wonderfully sagacious in their method of feeding off shoals of herring fry. Out of the lagoon there was but one way, and this they guarded most carefully. Each time the sile attempted to escape, their pursuers swam in front of them, and drove them back into the shallow water, in a sort of *cul-de-sac* at the end of the little lagoon, and a mighty feast they must have made there. Every billet caught was simply choking with sile, and brought up five or six when it was gaffed.

In about an hour from the time I commenced fishing the red glow went out of the sky, and fearful of a fall among the rocks in the dark, I hastily put up my rod and made my way to the shore. Then came a serious question. I had forgotten the tide (what a number of important things one forgets when the fish are rising!—time, tide, trains, meals, and much besides—one man forgot his wedding!), and as at high water the sea reaches the foot of the cliffs for some distance, the question was whether it was best to risk breaking my neck in the dark among the cliffs, or attempting the walk home by the shore and possibly wading up to my waist, or deeper, in water for a portion of the distance. I decided upon the wading if necessary, and was glad I did, for on coming to the point which the water touches first, found that there was just six inches of dry sand between the sea and the cliff. The water being calm, this was enough, and in due course, bearing my uncomfortably heavy, though cheering weight of fish, I arrived at the quiet little Yorkshire town which, for the time, was my abiding-place.

In case this short account of billet-fishing with the fly may lead others to do likewise, it may be useful to add one or two practical remarks. The fly should be drawn fairly quick through the water. The billet usually break the water like a salmon when they rise, and should be struck. I prefer silver or white-bodied flies to red ones, as without the least doubt the billet take the fly for an improved baby herring, which is a very white silvery fish. The best bait of all for billet when they are feeding on sile is, of course, a young herring alive, on a paternoster; but the herring fry are difficult to catch without something in the nature of a minnow or fine seine net. As long as the billet are about it is as well to cast for them; sooner or later one usually takes the fly.

This fishing, when good, is very good indeed; its great fault is its occasionality, if I may coin a new word.





# CHAPTER VII

## THE BASS OF THE MAELSTROM

ITFUL gusts were coming off land, but for the first part of our journey they troubled us little, as, with all sails set, we glided quickly out of the bay, the wind being

dead aft. The bass had been playing havoc with my tackle and I was stowed away in the cuddy of the lugger mounting a Chapman spinner and arranging on it the tail of a mackerel—a capital bait for bass in those waters—cut 'partail' fashion. I was deeply absorbed in the intricacies of fastening off a piece of whipping with an end all too short, when the little vessel gave a lurch, there was a fearful crash overhead and the cuddy became suddenly darkened. On attempting to grope my way out I found myself shut in by a heap of sailcloth. It was no small accident—the mast had gone overboard. While rounding the rocky headland known as the Monkstone at the end of the bay a tremendous puff of wind had come

flying down a gully, hitting the mainsail like a sledge hammer. A splicing in the stay on the windward side slipped, and the mast, having no longer any support, snapped off short. There was a strong current setting in round the point, and all haste was made to get out an anchor.

My crew consisted of a pilot and his nephew. The one a quiet, cautious, and experienced old salt, equal to any emergency; the other, young, active, and willing, and as good a lad as ever sailed in the Bristol Channel.

'If you would come ashore with me, sir,' said the nephew, 'and look after the punt, I will borrow a saw and hatchet and we will be under weigh again in an hour's time.'

It was good news; for I quite expected this, my last day's bass-fishing for the season, would have to be abandoned, as we were five miles from the fishing-ground. It was then ten o'clock. The bass fed for about two hours during the strongest run of the flood tide, and if we were not on the spot by one o'clock we should be too late. While I put Harry ashore and watched over our little punt, for the tide was rising fast, our skipper remained on board, cleared the wreckage, moved the stump of the mast, and got everything ready for his nephew, who, fortunately for us, had served an apprenticeship with a shipbuilder. He returned in about half an hour's time, and the end of the upper portion of the mast was soon trimmed

up and carefully shaped. But it was a difficult task to replace the heavy pole. While Harry and his uncle lifted it, I hauled on to the forestay, and by degrees our 'stick,' as yachtsmen say, pointed once more heavenwards. An hour later we were heading towards the bass-ground, but with one reef down, for the simple reason that our mast was not long enough to carry the whole sail. I returned to the cuddy, finished arranging my tackle, and then took a turn at the helm. After all we arrived at the fishing-grounds in good time.

Half a mile from the mainland stands a rocky, treeless, rabbit-haunted island, of a hundred acres or more. During the flood-tide a tremendous current sweeps through the channel, and curls and twists, and boils and eddies round the shoals and sandbanks on either side of the fairway.

The local method of fishing is to cruise backwards and forwards across the current, trailing spinning bait, or strip of mackerel, or gurnard skin, or sometimes a whole, but very small, mackerel, called by the fishermen of those parts a 'joey.' The boat must be fast and smartly handled, and, it need hardly be said, there must be a good stiff breeze. None of these essentials were wanting, but owing to our shortened mast we were, as I have said, obliged to keep one reef in the mainsail, which, of course, handicapped us immensely. Worse than this, we were unable to shift our lug when going about, so that on one

tack we practically lost about one-third of our sailarea. The result was that, whenever the wind fell a little the current caught hold of us, we lost ground, and were about a quarter of an hour in regaining the fishing-ground.

As keenly interested in the bass as ourselves were about four or five hundred gulls which were dotted about the cliffs, waiting for the curtain to be raised and the play to commence. Now and then one would launch itself into the air, take a swoop down near the surface of the water, utter a cry, and then fly back again, as if to say, 'No, they have not come yet; you can stay where you are.'

So far the tide had not run very fiercely, and we had no difficulty in holding our own, for there was a good sailing breeze. On one side of the boat we had out the mackerel-tail bait, spinning splendidly on the Chapman spinner, and on the other the head of a mackerel, with about three inches of skin brought to a point—a bait with which I had killed several fish on various occasions. Gradually the current became stronger, and little eddies and whirlpools began to form over the sandbanks. Sometimes we were in these and the boat would be twisted round, and almost taken aback before we knew where we were; but we generally managed to keep in the deeper water of the channel, and let our baits play over the edges of the sandbanks. Very soon a yacht joined us, and began cruising over the bass-ground-much too large a

vessel for the place. One or two other boats from a fishing-town sailed up, and five minutes later the fun began.

The gulls saw the fish before we did. Suddenly there was a universal cry from the throats of the birds, and they came dashing down to the water, fighting fiercely with a shoal of bass for the unfortunate herring-fry. Chased by the bass beneath, harried by the gulls above, the poor little fish had a very bad time of it. Our aim and object was to follow the gulls. Wherever they went there we knew were the herring-fry, and wherever herring-fry there also were the bass. It was exciting, but could hardly be called sport. There was no play—in fact a rod was useless. The boat could not be brought to, nor could a fish be followed. The tackle had to be strong enough to bring them in willy-nilly.

First came a tremendous pull on the mackereltail spinning bait, and on hauling in I was disgusted to find two hooks were broken. Nothing short of a Mahseer triangle would do for that fishing. Harry, who had hold of the line bearing the mackerel head, was more fortunate, and very steadily and quietly hauled in a bass of about 3 lb. Then the wind fell somewhat, and just as we were expecting great things we were drawn back into the swirling maelstrom, and, much to our disgust, saw the occupants of all the other boats hauling in fish while we were whirled and twisted about in the boiling waters. My crew did

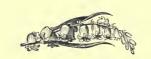
their best, but it was a quarter of an hour or more before we again reached the scene of action. Meanwhile, having prepared another mackerel-tail bait, and fitted up the Chapman spinner with the strongest and largest triangles I had in my box, I was rewarded by bringing another 3 lb. or 4 lb. bass into the boat. And thus our sport continued, the occupants of the yacht and companion fishing-boats hauling in bass every few minutes.

If we could have held our ground I believe we should have made a splendid bag, but fortune was against us; though, all things considered, I ought to have been thankful for having done any fishing at all that day. I very much wanted the men to come to an anchor and fish with drift lines, but they assured me that if they did the stream was so strong their anchor would drag until it fouled in a rock or stone and they might be unable to get it up again. The conclusion I came to was that a better way of fishing the ground would be with drift-lines from a small boat moored with a heavy stone.

The play ended as suddenly as it began. The water ceased to be broken by the bass, and silently and quietly the gorged gulls flitted off to their resting-places among the cliffs, where, let it be hoped, 'good digestion waited on appetite.' So our helm was put down, and we left those tumultuous waters for the little haven at the end of the bay.

The wind was light and night had fallen before we

turned the point off which our mishap occurred in the morning. Dotted about Saundersfoot bay were little fires, blazing up from stoves which the herring-fishermen had placed in the centre of their small open boats to temper the chilly air of an October night. We dodged the drifting nets as best we could but sailed over one in the darkness. As we approached the old harbour we were becalmed, and Harry, putting out a long sweep, slowly brought us up to the steps at the foot of the cliff path leading to the 'Eyrie,' a Welsh edition of Bleak House, but hallowed by memories of Tennyson and Landseer.





## CHAPTER VIII

## ALL IN THE DOWNS

ARLY one cold winter's morning I was lying gazing at Luke Fildes's pathetic picture of the 'Empty Chair,' which hung framed on the bedroom wall, and was thinking of Dickens and Broadstairs and Bleak

thinking of Dickens and Broadstairs and Bleak House, when the sound of a distant gun came echoing over the sea. A minute later there followed another faint 'boom,' and the bell from the lifeboathouse clanged out a summons to the brave Deal boatmen to turn out of their warm beds and hasten away in the good boat 'North Star' to the relief of a ship in distress.

There was already a clatter of hurried footsteps on the roadway, and long before I could be dressed the lifeboat would have glided down the steep beach and into the sea; so, more or less philosophically, I turned me over for another doze, as it was yet early. But that doze was not to be. Presently in burst the little skipper, much excited with minute-guns and vessels in distress, and laden with the information that a foreign ship was aground on the Goodwins, though there was no sea on, and the day was clear. There would evidently be no loss of life, but a good ship might be engulfed in those dread sand banks. The little skipper having exhausted his subject, turned his attention to a proposed raid on the whiting of the Downs, and informed me that Jonah, our commander in things piscatorial, said that the tide would serve us at ten o'clock, and Jonah had some lovely lugs (the said 'lugs' being the nastiest of the sea-worms), and Jonah would not be surprised if we caught a large cod, and Jonah had said this and Jonah had thought that.

'Now, get up, do!' ordered my little visitor in conclusion, and tripped downstairs for further converse with aged fishermen concerning their perilous adventures on the Goodwins.

Let it be understood at the outset that the little skipper was extremely youthful for the rank which had been conferred on him in our many fishing expeditions. In fact, he had not yet attained the mature age of ten; but, for all that, having commenced his life as an angler when only six by catching a cod of nine pounds, and having a, perhaps inherited, love of things marine and fluvial, he was no mean fisherman and more handy in a boat than many a landlubber of double his age.

We were staying in the quaint old portion of Deal, where houses with Dutch roofs, wooden balconies, and verandahs, attained by rickety wooden steps, are built in picturesque confusion more or less on the beach. The walls of little gardens are lapped by the waves of the equinoctial gales during spring tides. These gardens give great opportunities for smuggling on a small scale and the landing of wreckage from the Goodwins. There is in Deal no scarcity of cigars or chunks of uncut tobacco which have not paid duty, and it is quite clear that some of the inhabitants are true to their ancient traditions.

Nowhere are the coastguards more vigilant, a bronzed-faced blue-jacket inspecting most of the fishing boats as they come on shore unless they have been no great distance out to sea. But this is as much for wreckage as for undutiful tobacco or spirits.

In this matter of wreckage the Deal boatmen propound a grievance. That which they gather from the Goodwins they think should belong to them; but the Customs take it and only pay them salvage money. Thus one does not see at Deal, as in a certain Cornish village I could mention, the fisher lasses decked out on Sundays in Parisian gloves and Lyons silks, saved from the wreck of some unfortunate foreign vessel. It is good, no doubt, this rule as to salvage, but it is questionable justice when a ship is derelict and would in the course of a month or two be engulfed in the sand, that the poor boatman who

fetches away from her a small cargo of spars and other timber, which would otherwise be lost, should only receive a fraction of the worth of it all.

But this November morning the Customs concern us not, for we are bent on taking in a cargo on which no duties can be levied. Our little craft is named 'The Twins,' out of respect to two maiden aunts of Jonah who bore that relationship to each other, and, on dying, bequeathed such a legacy to their nephew that he was able to buy the boat. 'The Twins' are—no, is—high and dry on the beach, just below the capstan, and quite thirty yards from the sea. Jonah asks us to get on board; then, we having obeyed, he looses the chain, and, at the rate of some thirty miles an hour we go, slap-dash, down that steep beach and into the sea, with a great splash, taking in quite a bucketful of water over the stern.

'I ought to have turned her,' explains Jonah. 'We usually come on to the beach broadside and haul up stern foremost, so as to get afloat bows first; but it was too dark and rough last night when I came in with the herrings, and we had to haul up stem first.'

My fair-haired, blue-eyed little skipper busies himself hooking on the rudder and takes the helm, Jonah hoists the sail, and away we dance over the rippling water and head for the 'Gull' lightship. Jonah thoughtfully produces a small suit of oilskins, ancient but serviceable, and in these the little skipper is dressed, much to his delight. For a long time he sits in this fisher's garb, saying nothing but looking proudly seaward, and full of the sense of his responsibilities. Meanwhile our crew, a tall, black-bearded, reserved man, settles himself to a morning pipe and to get ready the tackle he deems necessary.

It is an offshore wind, and numbers of vessels are sailing through the Downs, the flood tide helping them on their journey to London or ports further northward. The wind is light, and every stitch of canvas is set. For a wonder not a steamer is in sight. Almost every kind of sea-going vessel seems to be in the Downs this morning. A great dandyrigged barge with tanned sails comes gliding by us, and a topsail schooner a mile to seaward of us gently inclines her tapering masts to the breeze. Off Dover, and coming towards us, is that most beauteous of ocean birds—a ship under full sail. Jonah, by request, instructs the little skipper in the mysteries of spankers, main top-gallant stay-sails, foretopmast studding-sails, lower main top-gallant-sails, and others of the twenty or more grey wings which a three-masted, square-rigged vessel spreads in her flight over the sea. He points out to us barques and brigs, brigantines and yawls, and a somewhat uncommon vessel, coming in sight out of the haze off Dover--a three-masted schooner. Of luggers, hailing mostly from Deal, there is an unlimited quantity, but most of these have reached their fishing

ground, and their crews are industriously endeavouring to gather in the harvest of the sea, principally represented hereabouts by whiting.

Jonah's marks are a tall chimney, a brick tree which grows out of the roof of the factory in which Deal sprats are turned into sardines à l'huile, and a certain picturesque windmill. There is another pair of marks Doverwards, and, these having been brought into line, the anchor is dropped, the cable flies out, and 'The Twins' is brought up with a jerk—clear evidence, if any were needed, that a wild tide is running northward. Not only is the tide wild, it is also eccentric and unlike other tides, for it runs towards Ramsgate for three or four hours after high-water. We are to fish, says Jonah, on the 'ease of the flood and draw of the ebb'; and it is very evident that at present the flood is un-'easy,' for no leads that we have in the boat are heavy enough to hold the bottom. The little skipper is mildly indignant, and asks how we are to catch anything when his line is streaming out astern and several fathoms above the fish. Jonah counsels patience: the tide will soon ease, he says.

Ten minutes later I find I can hold the bottom, for I am fishing with a fine silk line which offers little resistance to the water, and no sooner does this happen than there come a couple of sharp jerks at the top of my short rod and I wind up a lively whiting of a pound or more.

Every minute now the current grows less strong, and the little skipper, who is fishing with a stout gut paternoster fastened to a fine handline, hauls up his first fish. To his great disgust it is a spurdog, a spiteful-looking miniature shark, which can inflict a poisonous wound by means of a spike placed behind its dorsal fin. Jonah handles the fish with extraordinary care, and cuts off its head before attempting to dislodge the hook from its mouth. While this is going on I land two more whiting, and Jonah begins to look with more respect than he has hitherto done on my rod, reel, and gut tackle. I am to convert worthy Jonah to-day, for the water is clear and there is no wave, so that in all probability his coarse handlines will catch but few fish. His arrangement of chopsticks, blunt tinned hooks, and hemp snooding is now hauled up. The baits are intact; not a fish would look at them. Before Jonah can let down his line the little skipper shouts joyously that he has another fish-a big one -and, handling the line tenderly to prevent a breakage, brings up two silver whiting at once.

'Odd I don't get ere a bite,' says Jonah, more to himself than to us, as he flings the fish into the bottom of the boat. 'Well, if there ain't another!' for I am winding up my reel, and the rod-top is jerking violently. I am hoping that it is a very large whiting which has taken my bait, but it is nothing more than a spotted dogfish, which fights gamely for his life. I regard my capture somewhat contemp-

tuously, and ask Jonah why he does not treat it as he did the spurdog.

'Throw that overboard!' says our commander slowly, with a strong Kentish drawl; 'why, that fish's worth more'n a whiting. I could get twopence for he. They eat he hereabouts.'

We live and learn truly. Here is a fish which I had always cast away, and had only once heard tell of a man (and that man a French sailor) eating, and yet at Deal it is held in higher esteem than whiting. We will do as Deal does. That fish shall figure on the dinner-table, but with one of another variety in reserve should it prove uneatable.

The next capture is a small whiting on the thick handline. Jonah hauls it up smartly, remarking complacently that he knew he should get something soon. But when the little skipper and I have between us caught eighteen silver whiting to four taken by our crew, that worthy remembers he has a bit of gut in his pocket a gentleman once gave him, and ties it on, henceforward catching about as many fish as we do.

The tide eases until it is easy indeed, and our lines go down close to the side of the boat. The fish begin to bite shyly, and to meet their views I put on tiny hooks and small fragments of bait, which proceeding further astonishes Jonah, more especially as the alteration leads to the capture of half-a-dozen fish while the other lines are catching nothing. Then

we get no more bites, and Jonah says we shall catch no more until the 'draw of the ebb.' So we refresh the inner man and hold a conference on whiting and their ways. Jonah confesses himself converted on the subject of fine tackle for sea-fishing, and we pass a resolution that our modern methods of sea-fishing are, when the water is clear, an advance on the tackle used by the fishermen. In coloured water, or at night, we know that the tackle which will haul up the fish quickest is the one which will soonest fill the basket.

The sun is setting behind Deal, and the whole town is bathed in golden vapour. The wind has fallen, and the sails of the ships hang down and flap against the masts as the vessels roll slightly from side to side. I look regretfully at the old portion of the town, with its red Dutch roofs and quaint old houses, built on the beach—picturesque objects which an improving (save the mark!) town council proposes in part to sweep away to lengthen an already overlong parade. To the northward is another instance of vandalism—the remains of a castle, with walls five yards thick, commenced by Bluff King Hal, and finished by good Queen Bess. All is levelled save the dungeons, and because, forsooth, the sea was encroaching and undermining the foundation. Was not such an ancient landmark worthy the few hundred pounds which would have enabled proper protection from the sea to be made?

This old fortress has a place in our history, for here it was that Colonel Hutchinson, one of those who signed Charles the First's death-warrant, was imprisoned. His room had five doors, it is said, and the unfortunate gentleman was literally killed by the currents of air which played about him in winter. The castle is described as having been at that time a poor dilapidated place garrisoned by half-starved guards, who were eaten up with vermin and cheated out of half their pay, spending the other half in drink. The War Office sold the castle for building material not fifty years ago. It realised something over 5001.

We are now facing southward. The first capture is a dogfish, which the boatman handles carelessly enough, explaining that this one is a 'sweet William and real sweet eating.' In appearance it is exactly like the little blue dogfish which we caught earlier in the day, but it is without the dangerous spur on its back. Soon the whiting bite as merrily as ever, and the floor of the boat is littered with the slain. 'Shouldn't wonder if we hadn't five score,' says Jonah, and sure enough when we count the fish that evening there are no fewer than a hundred and seven of them.

But whiting, spur and spotted dogs, and Sweet Williams, are not our only captures. Before the anchor is raised half-a-dozen flat fish are flapping their tails on the bottom of the boat. A stray codling greedily swallows both the baits on the little skipper's line, and the inevitable hermit, or king, crab,

whose hermitage or palace, as you like to put it, is a whelk shell, of course makes his appearance. He tumbles into the bottom of the boat immediately he is hauled over the side, retreats into his shell for awhile, then he protrudes his legs and begins to crawl about among the dead and dying whiting, carrying that mansion of a departed whelk on his back as usual. A small conger, too, creates a small excitement on board, and mixed with the silver whiting are a few pout.

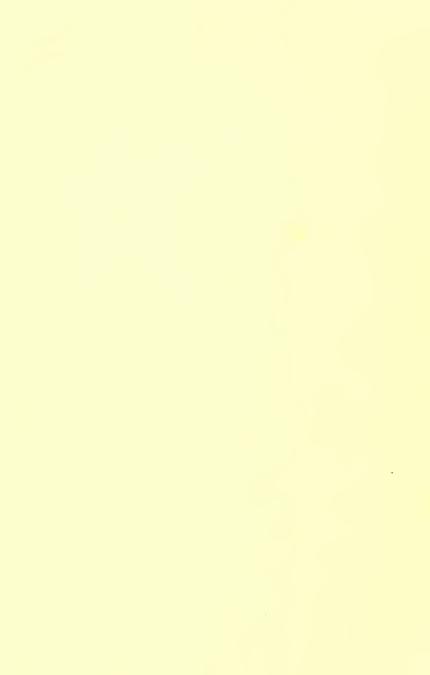
The 'draw of the ebb' increasing to such an extent that we can no longer hold the bottom, Jonah weighs the anchor, and, each of us taking an oar, we row home. Cold and darkness set in before we reach the beach; but we dread neither, having a good pilot in Jonah, and means of keeping warm in our hands. We take the beach broadside on, the rudder is unshipped, and 'The Twins' is hauled ignominiously, stern foremost, over the shingle, three weather beaten, pilot-jacketed friends of Jonah running round the capstan. We ask one of them what happened to the lifeboat in the morning, and learn that a tug from Ramsgate arrived before her at the Goodwins and towed off the stranded vessel.

Our pleasant day in the Downs has come to an end. We feel grateful for the cheery fire which blazes in our cosy room. But our work is not yet over, for baskets of fish have to be sent to country friends by an evening train. That done we sit down

to fried whiting and twopenny nurse-dog, and pronounce the latter sweet, soft, and watery, and we decide that the French sailor was unworthy of his nation, and that the people of Deal are, to say the least, peculiar in their tastes.

[Note.—I have to acknowledge the courtesy shown me by the Editors of the 'Field,' the 'Graphic,' and in the case of one chapter, the 'Fishing Gazette,' in allowing me to reprint so much of this book as was serialised in their publications. With the exception of the scene in the mill-house garden, the illustrations are reproduced from my photographs.—J. B.]





# NEW BOOKS RELATING TO SPORT BY JOHN BICKERDYKE.

A NEW VOLUME OF THE BADMINTON LIBRARY.

#### MODERN SEA FISHING.

With Contributions on Foreign Fish, Tarpon, &c. by W. Senior, Sir H. GORE BOOTH, and A. C. HARMSWORTH.

With Illustrations by C. NAPIER HEMY and R. T. PRITCHETT.

LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO. London.

#### DAYS IN THULE

WITH ROD, GUN, AND CAMERA.

I vol. 3s. 6d.

'Delightful sketches of sport and nature in a comparatively little frequented region. . . . Charmingly illustrated.'—MORNING POST.

'In a book like this, in which there is not a dull page, it is a somewhat difficult task to decide which portion of it is most entertaining.'—Field.

'Brightened by plentiful flashes of humour.'—READING MERCURY.

'Quite full of information about all sorts of sport in the Hebrides.'-St. PAUL'S.

'Written with knowledge and humour; and the scent of the peat, with an occasional whiff of the herring and the heather, is in it.'—Speaker.

A. CONSTABLE & CO., 14 Parliament Street, London.

## A BANISHED BEAUTY.

A NOVEL.

With Illustrations, Crown Svo. 6s.

'A joyous love idyl succeeds to tragedy. . . . Captain Profumo Walker and Amos Gildersleeves are distinct additions to the sporting gallery which honest Mr. Briggs adorned in days of yore.—ATHENÆUM.

'Told in high spirits, it can hardly fail to beget high spirits in its readers.' SATURDAY REVIEW.

'One of the best novels of the season.'-OXFORD GAZETTE,

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD & SONS, Edinburgh and London.

#### BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

#### THE BOOK OF

## THE ALL-ROUND ANGLER.

A COMPREHENSIVE TREATISE ON ANGLING IN BOTH FRESH AND SALT WATER. (Illustrated.)

472 pp. and exhaustive Index. Cloth, 5s. 6d. Large paper signed copies, in Roxburgh binding, 25s., post free.

'An invaluable standard of reference. . . . The man who is master of its contents will know all that the angler need know.'—Field.

'The author has omitted nothing.'-YORKSHIRE POST.

The four divisions of this book, entitled 'Angling in Salt Water,' 'Angling for Game Fish,' 'Angling for Pike,' and 'Angling for Coarse Fish,' are also published in separate volumes.

L. UPCOTT GILL, 170 Strand, London.

### THE CURIOSITIES OF ALE AND BEER.

Illustrated with over 50 quaint Cuts.

'An entertaining book.'-TIMES.

'Everything in the way of anecdote or curious fact, all that is drawn from poets, prose-writers, ballad-nongers, compilers of curious records and regulations, and an infinity of other sources, bearing on this and the kindred subjects of hop-growing, malting, brewing, ale-houses, ale-wives, and beer drinkers of the past, seem here gathered together and set forth in an attractive way.'—Daily News.

## THAMES RIGHTS & THAMES WRONGS.

Small fcp. 1s. 6d.

'Discusses a burning question with incisive vigour and adequate knowledge, sets forth a constructive policy, and does so with knowledge, moderation, and ability.

SPEAKER.

A. CONSTABLE & CO., 14 Parliament Street, Westminster.

# AN IRISH MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

#### A LEGEND OF THE SHANNON.

Second Edition. Illustrated by E. MORANT Cox. Cloth, 1s. 6d.; paper, 1s.

'The fairy scenes are delicately presented, and Mr. Morant Cox's graceful illustrations are very sympathetic with the author's charming phantasy.'

SATURDAY REVIEW.

'A rollicking tale of fun, fairies, and fish by a master of anglers.'- GUARDIAN.

' Daintily illustrated.'-PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, & CO., London.







# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

NOV 2 71957

Form L9-40m-7,'56(0790s4)444

SH Cook -439 Days of my life C77d on waters and fresh and salt

A 001 179 823

SH 439 C77d-

